

# Pressklipp om Afghanistan



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Årgång 10



... SAYS THAT YOU'RE PAYING MORE ATTENTION TO  
YOUR BEARD THAN TO HIM

## PRESSKLIPP OM AFGHANISTAN

☐ är ett samarbetsprojekt mellan Svenska Afghanistankommittén (SAK) och Afghanistankomiteen i Norge (AiN). ☐ utges varannan månad som en nyhetsservice för SAKs och AiNs medlemmar, lokalkommittéer och styrelser. ☐ detta nummer är sammanställt och redigerat av Börje Almqvist och Peter Hjukström. ☐ pressklipp till kommande nummer mottages tacksamt från läsekretsen till adress: Svenska Afghanistankommittén, Sturegatan 16, 114 36 STOCKHOLM, SVERIGE (Märk kuvertet med "Pressklipp"). ☐ prenumerationspriset för 1998 är 250 kronor och inbetalas på pg 64 23 90-9, Svenska Afghanistankommittén. Notera på inbetalningskortet att betalningen avser prenumeration på "Pressklipp".

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# Biståndskris i talibanernas land

SJD 10/11 -98

**D**et går en underton av vrede och trots genom senaste numret av *Afghanistan-Nytt*, som utsänts i 22 000 exemplar som tack till alla som bidragit med hjälp till jordbävningsoffren; vad hjälpen gick till redovisas i bild och text.

Vi får läsa om de amerikanska raketattackerna mot terroristen Usama bin Ladins baser och hur de utländska hjälporganisationerna reagerade. Alla utlandsanställda evakuerades och ingen kom till skada, trots flaggbränningar och demonstrationer mot de amerikanska och pakistanska regeringarna och hot om hämndaktioner.

**Högst initierat** skriver Genèvebaserade Edward Girardet om ett möte 1989 med Usama bin Ladin, "en ung, arrogant saudier", bland arabiska wahabbiter som förskansat sig i bergen mellan Kabul och Pakistan. "Får jag se er igen ska jag döda er", sade Usama. "Det här är vårt jihad, inte ert." Artikeln är viktig för att förstå bakgrunden till terroristledarens och "de arabiska afghanernas" betydelse och ställning och varför de så länge tolererades av USA och Pakistan. Girardets slutsats: "Afghanerna har rätt att lösa sina problem själva. Världssamfundet borde enbart syssla med att ge landet en form av bistånd som är till nytta för folket, och inte underblåsa den maktkamp som har härjat i landet ända sedan kriget bröt ut 1978."

De internationella hjälporganisationerna höll just på att förhandla om talibanernas dekret att flytta deras kontor till en olämplig byggnad i Kabul när USA:s missil-attack kom som en blix från klar himmel, tätt följd av våldsamma demonstrationer också mot hjälporganisationerna själva och mot FN och mordet på en italiensk FN-tjänsteman. Nu är det alltså kris för hjälpen till Afghanistan, rapporterar Anders Fänge, på grund av talibanernas byråkrati och hat mot hjälporganisationer.

**Regimen stängde** Svenska Afghanistankommitténs kontor i Kabul den 23 juli som den sista av hjälporganisationerna, dessutom tre kliniker, och talibansk byråkrati har satt andra käppar i hjulet för fortsatt verksamhet. De officiella argumenten mot de utländska hjälporganisationerna går ut på att de utgör ett hinder för Kabuls islamisering. Planeringsministern Qari Din tror att FN ska rädda Kabuls befolkning och "Allah är den störste givaren".

**Krisen tycks** begränsad till Kabul, ty ute i provinserna pågår hjälparbetet ganska normalt. Ännu är det ingen politisk kris för biståndet som helhet. Talibanrörelsen är heterogen och svår att bedöma, menar Fänge. "Det är ytterst svårt att försöka gissa vad som pågår i huvudet på människor som är fast övertygade om att de har tumme med Gud." Förutom kärngruppen vet man dock att det

finns folk av mera moderat karaktär.

Erfarenheten visar att talibanerna ute i provinserna är mera pragmatiska och inser vad en stängning av biståndsprojekten skulle innebära, socialt och politiskt. Vinner den pragmatiska linjen finns det större möjligheter att acceptera kompromisser och en fortsättning. Än så länge kommer det svenska arbetet att fortsätta, dvs fortsatt stöd till drygt 600 skolor och 200 vårdcentraler samt ett jordbruksprogram; en verksamhet som kommer att kräva omkring 80 miljoner kronor 1999.

Svenska Afghanistankommitténs grundläggande princip är att biståndet riktar sig till det afghanska folket och inte till staten eller regeringen. "Vi måste fortsatt kunna nå kvinnor och flickor och kontrollera kvaliteten, inriktningen och tillförlitligheten i programmen. Hittills har detta gått, trots talibanregimen. Framdeles kan det bli svårare", skriver Peter Hjukström.

Afghanistankommitténs ordförande Karin Ahrlund tänker inte ge upp: "Motgångar är till för att övervinas! Vi vet att byborna vill ha vårt bistånd. Vi ska inte lära dem västerländska seder, men vi kan både respektera deras gamla traditioner och hjälpa dem till ett mänskligare och värdigare liv. Det afghanska folket behöver vår hjälp många år framåt. Vi får inte svika dem vi bistått i snart 20 år. Det är bättre att finnas på plats och ställa upp och arbeta för ett gott syfte än att som passiv observatör bara hoppas att andra löser problemen."

SIGRID KAHLE

# Bön för fred i Teherans moské

Det sista Iran behöver nu är ett krig, säger invånare i huvudstaden Teheran som SvD:s utsända träffat.

TEHERAN, SvD

► En varm septembersol värmer meloner, päron och granatäpplen på en marknad i centrala Teheran där ett myller av iranier köpslår med handlarna på måndagseftermiddagen.

Livet i huvudstaden går sin stilla gång trots en fortsatt militär uppladdning vid gränsen till Afghanistan. Iranier som SvD talar med uppberod dock oroligt samma sak: Vi vill inte ha ett krig till, inte ytterligare ett långdraget och blodigt krig som det mot Irak.

Stämningen i tolvmiljonstaden Teheran är varken laddad med kriskänsla eller krigsförberedelser. Gatorna var som vanligt igenproppade av kaotiska och osande bilköer på måndagsmorgonen. På väg från flygplatsen till centrum längs Frihetsavenyn (döpt av

ayatollah Khomeiny efter islamska revolutionen 1979) förklarar iranske arkitekten Nouri att "Iran kommer aldrig att attackera talibanerna".

Efter det åtta år långa kriget mot Irak lovade Rafsanjani (förra presidenten) att det inte skulle hända igen. Det sista Iran behöver just nu är en ny militär konflikt. Och vi vill inte slåss, säger Nouri medan han tuggar intensivt på Hollywood-tuggummin han köpt under resan till Seattle.

## USA-besök följs spánt

Liknande förhoppningar om en fredlig lösning på krisen mellan Iran och taliban-kontrollerade Afghanistan möter runt om i Teheran. Många följer spánt iranske presidenten Mohammad Khatami besök i FN i New York där han talade inför generalförsamlingen igår. Reformvänlige Khatami är den första iranske presidenten att tala inför generalförsamlingen på tolv år. Inför församlingen iranska amerikaner i USA uppmanade Khatami i New York till bön som ett sätt att undvika krig med talibanerna som han fördömde som "kriminella fanatiker".

FN:s generalsekreterare Kofi Annan kallade också utrikesministrarna från USA, Iran och Afghanistan:s grannländer till krismöte på måndagen för att diskutera hur det hotande kriget mellan Iran och Afghanistan kan hejdas.

## Vill ha mannen hemma

Iranska tidningar är fulla med artiklar om krisen, men på Tadrichl-marknaden i Teheran var måndagen som vilket dag som helst.

Beslöjade kvinnor plockade lugnt och kräset bland högar med tomater, morötter och vindruvor. Efter att ha blivit tillrättavisa av polisen om att följa håret bättre under slöjan möter jag 27-åriga Farzaneh inne i Salahe-moskén. Hon slänger sin Chanel-väska på den tjocka persiska mattan, sätter sig med benen i kors bland 50-talet bedjande kvinnor och säger med Koranen i handen "Jag ber för fred och för att min man ska slippa åka till gränsen".

Säid, som staplar iranska mattor i sin butik, säger dock irriterat att "vi måste visa kraftfullhet vid gränsen, talibanerna är riktiga galningar

som inte får släppas fria i regionen". Det är inte ett krig mot talibanerna som han fruktar mest, utan den regionala kris som väntar om talibanerna får stöd av länder som Pakistan och Saudiarabien.

I en doftande kryddbod står Noosha Faizy och väljer mellan plastsäckar med oregano och timjan. Med oro i blicken säger hon "vi är mycket nervösa för att situationen ska urarta om endera sidan går till attack".

Flera män jag pratat med säger att de vill åka till fronten och slåss. De avskyr talibanerna och känner intensivt hat efter mordet på de elva iranska diplomaterna. Mordet är fruktansvärda, och det är svårt att motivera återhållsamhet, säger Noosha Faizy allvarligt medan hon ignorerar dotterns frågor om vad hon säger till den utövningen.

GUNILLA  
VON HALL  
SvD:s utsända



## Saudiarabien kallar hem <sup>SvD</sup> 23/9-98 diplomater från Afghanistan

**Dubai:** Saudiarabien har kallat hem sina från Afghanistan och bitt de afghanska diplomater som finns i Saudiarabien att resa hem. Det meddelade det saudiska hovet via den saudiska statstidningen på tisdagen. Den enda förklaring televisionen gav var "nationella intressen".

Saudiarabien, Pakistan och Förenade Arabemiraten är de enda länder som har erkänt talibanernas regim som kontrollerar större delen av Afghanistan.

Hemkallandena tros ha samband med att talibanerna låtit den saudiskfödde Usama bin Ladin verka i Afghanistan. bin Ladin misstänks ligga bakom bombattacker mot USA:s ambassader i Kenya och Tanzania. Han är illa sedd av regimen i Saudiarabien och har berövats sitt medborgarskap. USA - allierad med Saudiarabien - har förklarat att bin Ladin är fienden nummer ett i kriget mot terrorism. TT-REUTERS

## Nya robotanfall mot Kabul

**Kabul:** Sju civila dödades och 26 skadades vid två nya robotattacker mot Afghanistans huvudstad Kabul på måndagen, rapporterade den afghanska talibanmilisens radio. Den första roboten orsakade inga skador, men den andra slog ner i bostadsområdet Khair Khana i norra delen av staden.

Räddningsarbetare grävde frenetiskt i ruinerna av de fem hus som förstördes vid robotnedslaget i månrdet lade sig över Kabul. De flesta av offren var kvinnor och flickor som arbetade i en vävsuga i ett av de drabbade husen.

Måndagen var andra dagen i följd som Kabul utsattes för robotangrepp. I söndags dödades 66 personer och 215 skadades i det värsta raketanfallet på två år mot den afghanska huvudstaden.

Den talibanska ledningen anklagade oppositionsstyrkorna under ledning av den förra försvarsministern Ahmed Shah Massoud för attackerna. Hans styrkor står ca 25 kilometer norr om Kabul och kan nå mål i Kabul med sina tunga vapen. Förretträdare för oppositionsalliansen tillbakavisade på måndagen alla anklagelser och hävdade att man bara skjutit mot militära mål, inte civila bostadsområden eller marknadsplatser. TT-AFP SvD 22/9-98

## Talibanskt flyg DN mot rebellererna

AFGHANISTAN. Häftiga strider pågick på söndagen norr om Afghanistans huvudstad Kabul. Samtidigt kunde oberoende källor bekräfta att talibanskt stridsflyg genomfört en mängd flygräder mot rebellstyrkor. Enligt välinformerade källor rasade strider i ett område cirka tio mil norr om Kabul. Källorna sade att striderna har krävt offer men nämnde ingenting om antalet döda eller skadade. DN 2/10 TT-Reuters -98

## Landförluster DN tillbakavisas 1/10-98

AFGHANISTAN. Afganska oppositionsstyrkor uppgav på lördagen att de vunnit terräng i strider med den talibanska islamiska milisen i norra Afghanistan.

Oppositionsstyrkorna är lojala mot Ahmed Shah Massoud, militär chef för den bortdrivna regeringen. Enligt oppositionskällor slogs styrkorna med talibanerna efter att på fredagen ha tagit en flygplats och angränsande byar i provinsen Takhar vid gränsen mot Tadzjikistan. Talibanerna tillbakavisade helt oppositionens uppgifter om landförluster.

Från Pakistan kom uppgifter om att talibanerna har öppnat en offensiv mot Massouds styrkor i provinserna Parwan och Baghlan. Ingen av versionerna var bekräftad på lördagen. TT-Reuters

## "bin Ladin får miljonbidrag" DN

Washington: Saudiern Usama bin Ladin, anklagad för terrorism riktad mot USA, får miljoner i bidrag från medlemmar av Saudiarabiens kungafamilj, rapporterar en amerikansk tidskrift. Enligt amerikanska underrättelsekällor, som citeras av tidskriften US News and World Report, får bin Ladin troligen pengarna från hämndlystna släktingar till kung Fahd och dennes proamerikanska regim.

Bin Ladin har svurit att störta kung Fahd.

Tidskriften skriver i det nummer som kommer ut 12 oktober att bin Ladin nu har gjort av med sin egen enorma förmögenhet. Den tros en gång ha uppgått till 2,5 miljarder kronor. Nu påstås han vara beroende av donationer från anhängare för att finansiera sina operationer. TT-AFP 11/10-98

## Talibaner frigav iranier

IRAN. Fem iranier som hållits fångna av talibanerna i Afghanistan frigavs på fredagen. De fem har redan fått åka hem till Iran, rapporterade iransk statstelevision. De fem var handelsmän som suttit fångna i 15 månader. Frigivningen var ett resultat av påtryckningar från bland andra Irans ambassadör i Saudiarabien, enligt iransk tv. DN 10/10-98 TT-Reuters

# Talibaner anklagas för anfall mot Iran

SVD 8/10-98  
Teheran/Islamabad: Styrkor ur den islamiska talibanmilisen i Afghanistan anföll på torsdagen en iransk gränspostering men tvingades senare till reträtt efter stora förluster, uppgav den iranska nyhetsbyrån Irna. Striderna, som ska ha varat i tre timmar, ägde rum vid Torbat-e-Jam. Den iranske befälhavaren för revolutionsgardisterna i området, överste Azizollah Jaafari, uppgav att talibanerna angripit med granatkastare och kulsprutor. Den iranska motelden ska ha förstört tre talibanska posteringar. Jaafari sade senare att läget var lugnt men att de iranska styrkorna låg i beredskap i händelse av nya talibanska gränsprovokationer.

Talibanernas talesman Wakeel Ahmad hävdade sade att iranskt artilleri sedan i tisdags beskjutit gränsområdet utan att talibanerna besvarat elden. Han avfärdade de iranska uppgifterna som ren propaganda och bjöd in FN-observatörer att kontrollera uppgifterna om iransk artilleribeskjutning.

Talibanernas talesman sade att hans rörelse sökte en förhandlingslösning på konflikten med Iran, som samlat stora styrkor vid den afganska gränsen för att hämnas mordet på nio iranska diplomater i norra Afghanistan i augusti. TT-DPA

## Tre avrättade DN i Afghanistan

AFGHANISTAN. Talibanerna i Afghanistan har avrättat tre av sina egna soldater för övergrepp mot civila i staden Mazar-i-Sharif som intogs i augusti.

De hängdes offentligt eftersom de "vanhedrat talibanernas namn", rapporterar Shariatradion.

Soldaterna bröt sig in i privathem under förevändningen att de letade efter fiendesoldater och krävde sedan pengar samt begick övergrepp som "kränkte värdigheten", vilket troligen betyder att de begick våldtäkter.

De dömdes till döden och hängdes offentligt för att vara ett varnande exempel och för att rensa talibanerna från korrumperade element, hette det i den officiella Shariatradion.

Ingenting nämndes om de vitt spridda anklagelserna mot talibanerna för massaker vid intagandet av Mazar-i-Sharif och i synnerhet mordet där på åtta iranska diplomater. 7/10-98 TT-AFP

## Frivilliga afghaner till gränsen DN

Från TT-AFP 28/9-98

KABUL. Talibanledarna i Afghanistan har sänt 4 000 frivilliga till gränsen i väster, där Iran bygger upp en stor militär styrka, rapporterade Shariat-radion på söndagen.

De kommer från Farah-provinsen i sydväst, hette det i den officiella talibanradion.

Drygt 200 000 iranska soldater står i Iran vid gränsen mot Afghanistan i en uppblåssande fientlighet som fick näring av mordet i Afghanistan på åtta iranska diplomater och en journalist för sex veckor sedan.

## Talibaner varnar Iran

AFGHANISTAN. De religiösa talibanstyrkorna i Afghanistan anklagade på fredagen iranska stridsflygplan för att ha kränkt landets luftrum och varnade för "katastrofala följder" om kränkningarna fortsätter. Anklagelsen framfördes av talibanernas ambassadör i Pakistan Maulvi Said-ur-Rehman Haqqani. Det fanns ingen omedelbar kommentar från Iran. DN 3/10-98 AP



# Krav på utredning av <sup>Metro 2/11-98</sup> massakrer i Afghanistan

**FN bör snarast utreda blodiga massakrer på civila i norra Afghanistan vilka de styrande talibanerna anklagas för, anser människorättsorganisationen Human Rights Watch.**

Massakrerna är bland de mest fruktansvärda grymheter som begåtts under det långa inbördeskriget i landet, enligt gruppen. Ögonvittnen som lyckats fly till grannlandet Pakistan har berättat om hur de talibanska soldaterna skjutit på allt som rört sig, säger Human Rights Watch.

Soldaterna gick från hus till

hus och släpade ut hazarer, en etnisk minoritet som är shiamuslim, och sköt ned dem. Hundratal unga män greps också och packades in i järnvägsvagnar, enligt överlevande.

- I ett mycket brutalt krig är detta en särskilt brutal händelse. Vi talar om systematisk avrättning av kanske 2 000 civilpersoner, till stor del på grund av deras etniska och religiösa identitet, säger Patricia Grossman på Human Rights Watchs asiatiska avdelning.

Afghanistans andlige ledare, mulla Mohammed Omar, har

tidigare begärt att FN ska utreda en påstådd massaker 1997, då uzbekiska soldater från oppositionen ska ha mördat minst 2 000 talibansoldater. Human Rights Watch anser att talibanernas massaker var en hämnd för de morderna och uppmanar FN att utreda också dem.

En fullständig utredning av sanningen kring händelserna är första steget mot att ställa någon till svars, säger gruppen. Det kan också bidra till att bryta den onda cirkeln med vedergällningsattacker, hoppas Human Rights Watch. (AP)

## Afghaner måste lämna Iran

**Teheran:** De iranska myndigheterna gav på lördagen hundratusentals afghanska flyktingar som befinner sig olagligt i Iran tre veckor på sig att lämna landet. Enligt det iranska inrikesdepartementet måste de afghanska flyktingarna anmäla sig senast den 21 november. De kommer då att få utresetillstånd i Mashad i Khorasan-provinsen som gränsar till Afghanistan. Beskedet kom samtidigt som den amerikanska människorättsorganisationen Human Rights Watch publicerade en rapport om talibanernas massaker i den afghanska staden Mazar-i-Sharif i augusti. Organisationen beräknar att minst 2 000 civila miste livet. TT-AFP <sup>SVD 1/11-98</sup>

## Talibaner lovar släppa fångar

**Kandahar:** Afghanistans styrande talibanmilis lovade på onsdagen att släppa alla iranska fångar sedan FN:s ansvarige för Afghanistan, Lakhdar Brahimi, lovat att Iran i sin tur, släpper alla afghanska fångar. Överenskommelsen uppnåddes vid ett drygt fyra timmar långt möte mellan Brahimi och den främste ledaren för talibanerna, mulla Mohammad Omar. Det uppgav den talibanske talesmannen Abdul Hae Mutmaen.

Mutmaen tillade att talibanerna också gått med på att "inom kort" träffa iranska representanter ansikte mot ansikte i den saudiska huvudstaden Jidda för att försöka normalisera de bilaterala förbindelserna mellan grannländerna. TT-AFP <sup>SVD 15/10-98</sup>

## Afghanistan <sup>30/10-98</sup>

**Fångutväxling.** Den härskande talibanrörelsen i Afghanistan och dess motståndare i norr var på torsdagen i färd med att genomföra en utväxling av fångar, som blir den mest omfattande hittills. Under en veckas vapenvila ska vardera sidan släppa tusen krigsfångar, i grupper om 150 per dag. DN

TT-Reuters, Kabul

## FN garanteras <sup>DN</sup> säkerhet <sup>25/10-98</sup>

**AFGHANISTAN.** FN och företrädare för talibanregeringen i Afghanistan skrev på fredagen under en överenskommelse som ska ge anställda i biståndsorganisationer som verkar i Afghanistan bättre säkerhet. FN:s biståndspersonal ska därmed kunna återvända till landet.

Avtalet föregicks av fyra dagar av förhandlingar i grannlandet Pakistan. TT-AFP

## Talibaner öppnar fjärde front

**AFGHANISTAN.** Talibanska källor vid fronten sade på måndagen att talibanmilisen nu har inlett sin höst-offensiv med hårda strider på tre fronter i Afghanistan. En fjärde front kommer att öppnas inom de närmaste dagarna, tillade de.

- För stunden står striden hård i Tagab-distriktet och vi har ryckt fram något, sade en talibansk befälhavare vid fronten. Tagab ligger sju mil nordöst om huvudstaden Kabul.

I söndags rapporterades om häftiga sammandrabbningar norr om Kabul sedan talibanerna inlett sin stor-offensiv mot oppositionsstyrkor lojala mot den förre försvarsministern Ahmed Shah Massoud. Oberoende källor bekräftade att talibanskt stridsflyg hade genomfört en rad luftattacker. Massoud och hans förbänd kontrollerar omkring en tiondel av Afghanistan, ett område som sträcker sig från trakterna norr om huvudstaden till landets nordöstligaste delar. Deras motstånd är det sista kvarvarande hindret för talibanernas vilja att få total kontroll över landet. DN <sup>13/10-98</sup> TT-AFP

## Talibaner påstår sig ha funnit massgrav <sup>Metro 27/10-98</sup>

**AFGHANISTAN** Den styrande talibanmilisen i Afghanistan sa i går att man funnit massgravar med hundratal talibansoldater som dödats förra året i den norra delen av landet.

Informations- och kulturminister mullah Amir Khan Mutaqi sa till den Pakistanbaserade nyhetsbyrån AIP att gravarna upptäckts i Dasht-i-Haritan-området, norr om staden Mazar-e-Sharif och nära gränsen till Uzbekistan. (TT-Reuters)

## Hjälpflyg till Kabul ställs in

**Kabul:** Internationella rödakorskommittén ställde på måndagen in sina flygturer till Afghanistans huvudstad Kabul på grund av oppositionskoalitionens raketattacker mot flygplatsen. Enligt en talesman kommer förnödenheter i stället att flygas till staden Jalalabad i öster och transporteras landvägen till Kabul.

Oppositionen som leds av försvarsministern i den förra regeringen, Ahmed Shah Massoud, uppgav på måndagen att man slagit tillbaka en attack av de styrande talibanerna i provinsen Baghlan i norr. AP <sup>SVD 20/10-98</sup>

# Terroristen lever farligt

Osama bin Laden utgör en tung belastning för Afghanistan

● Den saudiske mångmiljonären Osama bin Laden, 42, som anklagas för att vara den internationella terrorismens bankir, och hans arabiska mujahediner lever farligt i Afghanistan även om de är hedersgäster hos de härskande talibanerna.

Risken för utlänning till USA är obefintlig. Men olika källor i Peshawar varnar för risken av ett blodigt drama.

Talibanerna är primitiva och hänsynslösa men de fördömer all terrorism och har därför tagit mycket illa vid sig av bin Ladens krigsförklaring mot supermakten och bomböden i Nairobi och Dar es Salaam, säger Afrasiab Khattak, känd kommentator, till AN.

Rykterna går: Olika tidningar har de senaste dagarna rapporterat att överste Khadafi kommer att ge bin Laden en fristad i Libyen, att han skaffat atomvapen, att han satts i husarrest och att en saudiarabisk agent avrättats i Kandahar för inblandning i en konspiration att mörda honom. En annan uppgift hävdar att pengarna på hans huvud – 15 miljoner kronor – fått honom att återvända till sina gamla baser i bergen nära Jalalabad.

## Avskydda

En sak är säker. Afghaner i genmen avskyr de arabiska krigarna och visade det inte minst under befrielsekriget mot Sovjets röda armé.

Bin Laden tycks också vara "oskadliggjord" och oformögen att agera så länge han åtnjuter talibanernas gästfrihet. Deras ledare, Mullah Omar, 40, har gjort klart att han inte tillåter någon att bilda "en stat i staten" och erbjöd sig i samtal med FN-medlaren Lakhdar Brahimi att ställa bin Laden inför rätta om man finner bevis för hans medverkan i terroristdåd i Saudiarabien och Afrika.

Situationen kompliceras av att talibanerna är mycket angelägna om internationellt erkännande för att kunna ta över den stol i FN som den största Rabbaniregimen fortfarande innehar. Bara tre nationer har ambassad i Kabul och av dem har Saudiarabien redan kallat hem sina diplomater som protest mot att regimen ger en fristad åt bin Laden.

## Tung belastning

Alla grannländerna mot Pakistan står ensade mot dem.

Bin Laden är en tung belastning för världens fattigaste och mest krigsförödd land och den hjälte dyrkan som man möter i Pakistan är till största delen "Made in Pentagon". Bombningen av hans läger sågs som en attack mot islam och påskade upp latent anti-amerikanska stämningar.

Men mycket tyder på att han inte ens är herre i sitt eget hus.

Rahimullah Yusufzai, journalist på "The News" i Peshawar, är en av de få utomstående som har regelbunden kontakt med talibanernas ledning och "araberna".



Osama bin Laden, utpekad som den internationella terrorismens bankir, lever farligt i Afghanistan, trots att han är de härskande talibanernas hedersgäst.

Foto: REUTERS

## AN i Pakistan

▼ Det här är del tre i AN:s artiklar från tragedins och sönderfallets gränstrakter mellan Pakistan och Afghanistan. Attas Aslam och port Bo Gunnarsson har besökt området och skriver en serie reportage som publicerades 20, 21 och 25 oktober.

Han är övertygad om att dr Ayman al Zawahiri, ledare för egyptiska "Islamic Jihad" och officiellt sekreterare åt bin Laden, är den som bestämmer och som planerar de ambassadbombningarna i Nairobi och Dar es Salaam.

Han har radikaliserat bin Ladens som tidigare bl a motsatte sig dödandet av civila amerikaner men nu manar till urskillningslös våld, säger han till AN.

Tidigare brukade Zawahiri ringa honom per satellittelefon för att läsa upp pressuttalanden men det upphörde han med efter

ett samtal på kvällen den 20 augusti. En halvtimme senare brade 70 Tomahawk-missiler ned i terroristlägret och oron för amerikansk spårning och avlysning har tyttat "araberna".

## Anwar Sadats mördare

Det finns drygt 400 arabiska krigare i bin Ladens sold. Här finns bl a två söner till blinde Sheikh Omar Abdul Rahman som avjänar livstids fängelse i USA för bombningen av World Trade Center i New York och en son till president Anwar Sadats mördare plus rader av folk som är internationellt efterlysta som terrorister.

Många av dem tjänar som livvakter åt bin Laden som ständigt har drygt 30 man runt sig. Vanliga afghaner hatar deras radikalisering och under kriget mot Röda armén dödade mujahedinder åtskilliga som sökt sprida sin egen form av strikt islam, wahabismen.

– Vi slå araberna som medokrar krigare, berättar Abdul Ga-

deer, en d mujahedin. Vi ville befria vårt land medan de ville bli martyrer eller skaffa stridsfärdighet för att starta heliga krig i sina egna länder.

Det var som om vi utkämpade två skilda krig. De försökte få oss att leva rent, låta skägget växa, ingen rökning, inga nöjen och mycket annat som stred mot våra vanor. De såg ned på oss och många av oss såg rött när de gav sina råd om hur vi skulle bli bättre krigare eller sökte omvända oss.

Talibanernas strikta islam går bättre ihop med wahabismen, men tolkningarna av Koranen går ändå i sär. Det är en orsak till att bin Laden och hans folk lever skild från samhället.

Talibanerna klarar nog bäst att ta hand om "araberna", säger Rahimullah Yusufzai.



Bo Gunnarsson Pakistan



## Fem skadade i attack mot Kabul

AFGHANISTAN. Minst fem personer skadades när ett tjugotal raketer på lördagen slog ned i Afghanistans huvudstad Kabul.

Enligt ögonvittnen träffades flygplatsen och ett bostadsområde intill av raketerna från oppositionsansens ställningar norr om Kabul.

Flygplatsen, som är både civil och militär, spärrades av efter attacken och det var inte känt hur stora skadorna var. De skadade personerna befann sig i bostadsområdet. TT-DPA, Kabul

29/11-98

## Talibanska bomber sägs ha dödat civila

AFGHANISTAN. Ett hundratal civila afghaner har dödats under talibanmilisens offensiv i provinsen Takhar i den nordöstra delen av landet, hävdar den afghanska oppositionen. Sjuttio civila ska ha dödats och mer än 100 skadats när talibanernas flyg bombade bostadsområden i staden Taloqan i onsdags. (TT-AFP)

## Usama bin Ladin åtalades i USA

USA. Den saudiske terroristen Usama bin Ladin och en av hans medarbetare åtalades på onsdagen i USA för sprängdåden mot två amerikanska ambassader i Östafrika. bin Ladin och hans militäre befälhavare Muhammad Atef kan båda knytas direkt till attentaten den 7 augusti i kenyanska Nairobi och tanzanska Dar es Salaam, enligt den federala åklagaren.

I attentaten dödade 224 människor och över 5 500 skadades.

bin Ladin och hans närmaste man, Mamdouh Mahmud Salim, åtalades i juni i en distriktsdomstol i New York för att ha planerat attentat mot amerikanska medborgare i en internationell sammansvärjning. Detta åtal var en följd av misstankarna att bin Ladin låg bakom sprängdådet mot en amerikansk militärförläggning i Saudiarabien 1996, då 19 personer dödade.

AP, New York

## Afghanistans talibaner friar bin Ladin

KABUL, TT-REUTERS. Talibanrörelsen som styr merparten av Afghanistan, deklarerade på fredagen att den från och med nu betraktar saudiern Usama bin Ladin som oskyldig, trots att han är misstänkt för att ligga bakom

bombdåden mot USA-ambassaderna i Tanzania och Kenya som krävde hundratal dödsoffer.

Efter ambassaddåden förtog USA bestraffningsräder bl a mot Afghanistan, där amerikanerna bombade vad som

troddes vara träningsläger för terrorister.

I sitt uttalande sade talibanregeringen att den kommer att uppfatta det som en attack mot afghanerna om anklagelserna mot bin Ladin fortsätter.

## Hårda strider i Afghanistan

Kabul: Häftiga strider mellan talibanmilisen och styrkor trogna kommendanten Ahmed Shah Massoud rasade på måndagen längs två fronter i Afghanistan. Båda sidor gjorde anspråk på segrar i den norra provinsen Baghlan, samtidigt som Massoud startade en andra offensiv i Nejrab, 85 kilometer nordöst om huvudstaden Kabul.

En talibankälla sade att minst tio Massoudtrogna soldater hade dödats, medan en medhjälpare till Massoud uppgav att "massor av milismän" hade mist livet. Under natten till måndagen blev Kabul beskjutet av raketer. Minst fyra raketer slog ned. Det fanns inga rapporter om skadade. TT-AFP

30/11-98

## Religiösa razzior i Afghanistan

AFGHANISTAN. Afghanistans religiösa polis har de senaste dagarna genomfört omfattande razzior i landet för att se till att de religiösa lagarna efterlevs. Män som rakat sig misshandlades. Polisen krossade också sprit- och vinflaskor och stack videobandspelare i brand.

Talibanerna styr 90 procent av Afghanistan. Deras stränga tolkning av islam innebär att musik och videor är förbjudna liksom all alkoholförtäring. Män måste bära skägg medan kvinnor är bannlysta från arbetsplatser och skolor. Kvinnor måste bära ett heltäckande plagg. AP, Islamabad

## Afghanistan

Offensiv. Den styrande talibanmilisen har startat en större offensiv med siktet inriktat på att kasta ut oppositionsstyrkor från staden Taloqan i norr, rapporterade nyhetsbyrån Afghan Islamic Press (AIP) på DN onsdagen. 12/11-98 TT-DPA

Indien

## Afghanistan värsta förtryckarlandet

USA. Afghanistan toppar USA:s lista över världens värsta förtryckarländer.

Det sade USA:s biträdande FN-ambassadör Peter Burleigh inför ett FN-utskott på måndagen.

Det är främst massgripan och avrättningar, våldtäkt och andra övergrepp på kvinnor, religiös förföljelse, mord på människor från den shiamuslimska minoriteten och på iranska diplomater i staden Mazar-i-Sharif i norra Afghanistan som upprör USA, sade han.

Kvinnor och flickor utgör inte Afghanistans tysta majoritet, utan Afghanistans tystade majoritet, framhöll Burleigh.

Världen kommer aldrig att acceptera en regering som förnekar kvinnors deras mänskliga rättigheter, och tillgång till utbildning, hälsovård och arbete, tillade han. DN 11/11-98 AP

## Miljonbelöning på bin Ladin

New York: Den terroristmisstänkte saudiske mångmiljonären Osama bin Ladin och hans medhjälpare åtalades på onsdagen i New York för sprängattentatet mot USA:s ambassader i Kenya och Tanzania 7 augusti. Det tillkännagav åklagare Mary Jo White.

En internationell efterlysning har skickats ut mot den mycket militanta islamisten Ladin. Samtidigt lovar USA en belöning på närmare 40 miljoner kronor för information som leder till bin Ladins gripan. Dåden krävde 224 dödsoffer och tusentals skadades i de östafrikanska staterna. TT-AFP

30/11-98

# Lars såg jordbävningens följder

TS L 25/11-98

Han deltog i katastrofarbetet efter det kraftiga skallet i Afghanistan i våras

## MARIESTAD

Den 30 maj i år, klockan 10.55, drabbades nordöstra Afghanistan av en mycket kraftig jordbävning. Skallet var det värsta i modern tid och nådde 7,1 på Richterskalan. 4 700 personer dödades och i 60 byar förstördes hälften av husen.

- Skallen fortsatte, fast i betydligt mindre omfattning, dagligen under hela juni, berättar Lars Grahnström som i juni kom till det otillgängliga bergsområdet som företrädare för Svenska Afghanistankommittén.



Lars Grahnström och Ingrid Andersson, båda sjuksköterskor, reste för Svenska Afghanistankommitténs räkning omgående ner till katastrofområdet. Deras uppgift var att delta i det akuta katastrofarbetet och planera och starta återuppbyggnaden av området. Lars Grahnström har sedan 1985 arbetat i Afghanistan och är bland de svenskar som har störst erfarenhet av landet. Han har varit i Afghanistan i sammanlagt fyra år och talar flytande persiska som är ett av de två språken som används.

Under måndagen var han inbjuden av Mariestads församlingsråd för att berätta om arbetet i Afghanistan.

Sverige är idag, vid sidan av EU, den största bistånds-

- Här i en dal låg byn Dashaq som vid jordbävningen i det närmaste försvann på grund av jordskred från båda sidor av berget. Bara två av de 1 500 begravda människorna har hittats, berättar Lars Grahnström.

Foto: JÄN FLEISCHMANN

givaren i Afghanistan och ger bland annat stöd till 30 000 afghanska landsbygdsflickors skolutbildning.

- Detta trots att talibanerna, som kontrollerar 80 procent av landet, driver en kvinnofiendlig politik. Talibanerna har ursprungligen sitt starkaste fäste på landet och det finns därför en motsättning mellan landsbygd och stad.

Som katastrofbistånd till området har Svenska Afghanistankommittén skickat tio ton ris och matolja. Kommittén, som får stöd från den svenska biståndsmyndigheten Sida, har tidigare organiserat skolutbildning för 120 000 barn i landet.

- Tidigare under Sovjets ockupation var USA en stor biståndsgivare. Men när Sovjet lämnade landet upphörde också intresset från USA.

Fram till augusti hade kommittén samlat in 2,4 miljoner kronor till jordbävningsskatestafrens offer och insamlingen fortsätter.

Anders Christiansson

0501-68742

## Grahnström inledde Afghanistanveckan

SÖNDAGS

SKÖVDE NYHETER 24/11-98

Av MARTINA RASK

Lars inledde Afghanistanveckan i Kyrkans Hus i Skövde.

Som startpunkt ordnade en rad föreningar ett möte där sjuksköterskan Lars Grahnström medverkade.

- Det finns 100 000 hemlösa i Afghanistan som behöver bostäder och mat, berättar han.

Lars Grahnström har vistats i Afghanistan under flera långa perioder de senaste åren.

Hans första kontakt med landet var 1985 då han arbetade för Läkare utan gränser.

Senaste mötet med människor i landet var i juni. I början på året dog nära 10 000 personer i den kraftiga jordbävningsskatestafrens och det var av den anledningen som Lars återigen fanns på plats.

- Jag var där för att titta på problemet med alla förstörda

bostäder. Tanken var att kunna se vad man kan göra åt problemet, berättar Lars.

### Ont om mat

Han berättar att det främst är jordskreden som dödade människor och förstört byarna. Eftersom även skördarna är förstörda har befolkningen mycket ont om mat.

Området härskar just nu några av Afghanistans mindre politiska grupper och i ett land med stor politisk oro är det svårt att få hjälp.

- De omgivande distrikten som inte drabbats har kommit med mycket hjälp, men det behövs mer, säger han.

Lars Grahnström kommer eventuellt även att besöka skolor i Skövde och berätta om sina erfarenheter. Veckan i övrigt innebär att Svenska Afghanistankommittén startar sin Julaktion-98 där befolkningen går till katastrofoffren i norra Afghanistan.

Man kommer även att visa utställningen Bibi Fatimazuh-



På Kyrkans hus. Lars Grahnström från Visby inledde Skövdes Afghanistanveckan med att berätta om sin senaste resa i landet. Här tillsammans med Tomas Magnusson från Afghanistankommittén i Skövde.

ra- en flickskola i Afghanistan, på stadsbiblioteket i Mariestad. Flickskolan är den fadder-skola som Skaraborgs Afghanistankommitté stöttar.

## Afghanistanveckan inleds med föredrag

Skövde/Skaraborgs Afghanistankommitté anordnar i samarbete med andra organisationer en Afghanistanveckan nästkommande vecka.

Den inleds med ett offentligt möte i Kyrkans hus i Skövde redan nu på söndag, den 22 november. Sjuksköterskan Lars Grahnström håller då föredrag och visar bilder från sin mångåriga tjänst i landet. Det kommer även att informeras om dagens situation i Afghanistan och ges även tillfälle till samtal och utbyte av erfarenheter från liknande situationer.

Senare under veckan kommer Grahnström att hålla samma föredrag i Mariestad. Skolorna i Skövde och Mariestad har fått erbjudanden om information av Grahnström.

Afghanistanveckan blir även startpunkt för Svenska Afghanistankommitténs Julaktion 1998. De insamlade medlen från den kommer att gå till rehabilitering av krigs- och jordbävningsskadade i norra Afghanistan. 20/11-98

SV



## AFGHANISTAN

# Talibaner redo stoppa narkotika

SVD 8/10-98

KABUL, TT-AFP  
► Talibanerna i Afghanistan kommer att göra en "allvarlig" ansträngning för att hejda framställningen av opium om FN erkänner dem som landets legala regering, sade rörelsens främste ledare mulla Mohammad Omar till den officiella nyhetsbyrån Bakhtar på onsdagen.

Enligt Omar är talibanerna beredda att agera omedelbart "eftersom det är dags att så opiumvallmo just nu".

Om FN villkorslöst erkänner Islamiska emiratet Afghanistan (IEA) kommer IEA också att villkorslöst och med kraft förhindra opiumodlingen runtom i landet, sade han.

## Ekonomiska skäl

Hittills har talibanerna i tysthet tillåtit odling av opiumvallmo för världens heroinmarknad. Skälet är närmast ekonomiskt eftersom landet under sin nuvarande isolering saknar andra inkomstkällor. Många fattiga bönder är beroende av inkomsterna från vallmoodlingen.

Att vinna internationellt erkännande är en het önskan hos talibanerna, som har utkämpat ett inbördeskrig i Afghanistan sedan 1994 och i dag kontrollerar nio tiondelar av landet. Men talibanmilisen har också väckt omvärldens motvilja både för sin hållning till opiumodlingarna och för sin rigida

tolkning av islam – särskilt då behandlingen av kvinnorna.

Omar sade att det är just Afghanistans opiumframställning som har fått FN att vägra att erkänna talibanstyret. Han tillade att "om omvärlden står för vad den säger" så är talibanerna nu redo att handla.

Torkat opium utvinns ur lokalt odlad vallmo och säljs i huvudstaden Kabul för ungefär 20 dollar (160 kronor) per kilo. Det förädlas sedan till heroin och smugglas ut via Pakistan, Iran och andra centralasiatiska länder.

## Förser Europa

FN:s organ för narkotikakontroll, UNDCP, har beräknat att 80 procent av allt heroin som tas i beslag i Europa har sitt ursprung i Afghanistan, främst i provinserna Helmand och Nangahar i söder och sydost. Båda dessa provinser är starka fästner för talibanmilisen.

Enligt bönder tar talibanregimen i skatt in drygt tolv procent av intäkterna från vallmoodlingen. Regimens narkotikakommission säger att talibanerna är i princip emot opiumframställning och framhåller att man av vallmo också producerar många nyttiga och ofarliga biprodukter för lokalt bruk.

Vidare menar talibanerna att heroin är en västlig uppfinning som inte används i Afghanistan.

## Terrorist ger igen med knark

Åkrarna i Shinwarprovinsen, i östra Afghanistan, har besätts. Till våren kommer den bruna marken att prydas i rött och vitt. Grödan är opiumvallmo och skördens ägare Osama bin Laden, världens mest eftersökta terrorist. Bin Laden anses av USA vara skyldig till sprängningen av dess ambassader i Nairobi och Dar es Salaam i början av augusti och en rad andra attacker. För honom är narkotikan ett vapen i kampen mot väst.

## UTRIKESKRÖNIKAN

Enligt uppgiftslämnare i östra Afghanistan och på andra sidan gränsen, i Pakistan, har bin Laden under sätningstiden kontaktat jordägare och ledande opium- och heroinhandlare. En jordägare som vistas i Pakistan men har stora opiumodlingar söder om den östafghanska staden Jalalabad berättar att ombud för bin Laden erbjudit sig att köpa upp allt han kan odla.

Enligt västlig narkotikaexpertis i Pakistan har bin Laden också förhandlat med pakistanska knarkkungar i det laglösa området längs gränsen till Afghanistan:

– För karlarna här är det attraktivt att samtidigt utkämpa det heliga kriget och tjäna pengar... han får inga problem att finna partners.

Enligt FN produceras i Afghanistan i år mellan två och tre tusen ton råopium. En stor del av skörden förädlas till heroin i kring 60 laboratorier i de södra och östra delarna av landet, varifrån det smugglas genom Pakistan, Iran och därefter Turkiet eller Centralasien till väst.

## Bomberna

Den 20 augusti sände USA 75 kryssningsrobotar mot bin Laden som straff för ambassadbombningarna, men utan avgörande effekt. Ett 30-tal människor med löslig anknytning till bin Laden dödades och ett antal byggnader skadades.

Fredliga försök att komma åt den i Saudiarabien födde terroristens finansiella imperium tycks ha haft större framgång. Även om bidragen strömmar in från muslimska anhängare har bin Ladens koncern Al-Qaida sett sig om efter nya inkomstkällor. Bland annat har man diskuterat insamlingsverksamhet med palestinska Hamas och andra extrema grupper i samband med en religiös konferens i Pakistan.

## bin Ladens liv

Efter att ha hamnat i det internationella rampluset har bin Laden, 41, tvingats vidta extra försiktighetsåtgärder. Förut hade han en livvakt på 200 man, de flesta araber, men omger sig nu med en mycket mindre handplockad grupp. Han sover sällan på samma plats två nätter i rad och byter snabbt mellan sina gömställen, befästa grottor i östra Afghanistans berg och två bostäderna i Kandahar, talibanregeringens högberg i södra delen av landet.

Bin Laden, som har fem söner med sina fyra hustrur, stöder sig alltmer på sin förstfödde, 14-åringen Mohammed, vilken levtt tillsammans med sin far nästan oavbrutet sedan augusti. En bild av far och son tagen tidigare i år visar en högst vacker yngling med en AK 47 i amarna, framför en världskarta. Bin Ladens framtid beror till stor del på talibanerna. De hävdar att han är gäst i landet och därför enligt gammal sed har rätt till skydd.

## Firade med talibaner

Men man har gjort en del eftergifter för omvärlden. Efter angreppet i augusti meddelades att bin Laden fått order att inte lägga sig andra länders affärer. I oktober fick en islamisk rättslärd i uppdrag att utreda huruvida bin Laden var skyldig till terrorism. Alla som kunde vittna uppmanades att träda fram. Utredningen avslutades för ett par veckor sedan med att landets högste domare Maulana Noor Mohammed Saqib uttalade att bin Laden var oskyldig. Enligt västliga underrättelsekällor firade bin Laden med en festmåltid tillsammans med talibantoppen i Kandahar. USA har utlovat en belöning på fem miljoner dollar för upplysningar som kan leda till att bin Ladens grips. Det tycks dröja innan det går därhän.

Jason Burke  
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# Astrid Morken school

Afghanske skolebarn og lærere kaller bare skolen for «sahieed» – martyr. Skolen heter egentlig «Astrid Morken school» og ligger i den pakistanske byen Peshawar. Navnet fikk den av afghanere som ville hedre minnet til Astrid Morken – hjelpearbeideren og journalisten fra Skaun – som ble drept av en landmine på vei ut av Afghanistan for ti år siden.

Børge Hoseth

Astrid Morken skole var opprinnelig lokalisert i en flyktningleir utenfor grensebyen Peshawar, men ligger i dag inne i selve byen. Barneskolen drives av Afghanistankomiteen og har om lag 500 elever, hvorav 400 er jenter.

Gisela Kruse er medlem av Afghanistankomiteen og besøkte skolen i oktober i fjor. Hun glemmer aldri den overdøende symfonien av lyder som møtte henne da hun entret skolebygningen.

– Klasserommene var nesten overfylte av elever. Til og med taket var tatt i bruk. Klasserommene hadde store hull både i gulv og tak – slik at du hadde innsyn i rommet under og over deg. Følgelig var det utrolig lytt, og lyden kom fra alle kanter. Etter en time måtte jeg bare rømme utendørs. Da var jeg fullstendig «gåen» i hodet på grunn av alt staket, forteller Kruse. Hun ble imidlertid veldig imponert av Astrid Morken skole og det arbeidet som blir nedlagt av de 25 kvinnelige lærerne som arbeider der.

## Driver til sammen 39 skoler

Odvin Forbord arbeider som koordinator i Peshawar, og har blant annet ansvaret for skolen som bærer Astrid Morkens navn. Den er en av to skoler Afghanistankomiteen støtter i byen.

– Vi bringer til veie alt fra pulter og tavler, til notatblokker og skrivesaker, forteller Forbord. I tillegg lønner vi lærerne, og vi forsøker å gi dem litt etterutdanning/oppgradering blant annet i engelsk.

– Generelt kan en si at det er veldig vanskelig for afghanske jenter å få skolegang, og det er spesielt vanskelig i Taliban-kontrollerte områder inne i Afghanistan, sier Odvin Forbord. Vi driver imidlertid 27 skoler sør for Kabul og 10 skoler i Balakshan-provinsen, og der har selvfølgelig jentene mulighet til å få undervisning. Spesielt er vi stolte av kvinneandelen på skolene i Balakshan-provinsen, hvor kvinneandelen blant lærere og elever er oppe i 20-25 prosent, sier Forbord, som legger til at disse skolene ikke ligger i områder som er kontrollert av Taliban-militen.

## Apartheid mot kvinner

Inne i Afghanistan fører Taliban-militen krig mot sine politiske motstandere generelt – og kvinnene spesielt. Kvinnene som bor i Taliban-kontrollerte områder tvinges bort fra skoler og universiteter. Militen kontrollerer i dag om lag tre fjerdedeler av landet, og både hjelpearbeidere og afghanere flykter.

–Afghanske borgere med høyere utdanning flykter bort fra de fanatiske fundamentalistene som driver apartheid mot kvinnene, sier Per Hornfelt, mangeårig medlem av komiteen og tidligere arbeidskollega av Astrid Morken.

– I dag er det viktigere enn noen sinne at vi støtter utdanningsprosjekt rettet mot afghanske barn og ungdommer. Det befinner seg fremdeles om lag 1,5 millioner afghanske flyktninger i Pakistan som aldri vendte tilbake til Afghanistan, sier Hornfelt.

Grunnen er enkel: Da den sovjetiske hæren forlot landet i 1989 begynte ulike geriljagrupperinger å slåss om makten, og siden har landet vært herjet av krigshandlinger og borgerkrig. Det betyr at afghanske flyktningbarn i Pakistan har behov for undervisning i afghanske skoler. Heldigvis finnes det tiltak som Astrid Morken skolen som takket være støtte, blant annet fra minnefondet etter Astrid Morken, Operasjon Dagsverk og offentlig støtte, gir afghanske barn muligheten til å få en utdanning.

Sør-Trøndelag 22/8-98

## Satte mineproblematikken på dagsorden

Mens Astrid Morken levde var hun bekymret for de om lag 3 millioner landminene som fantes i Afghanistan etter den sovjetiske hæren. Hun døde fordi lastebilen hun satt i kjørte på en landmine.

– Astrid Morkens død førte til at mineproblematikken kom på dagsorden i Norge, sier den tidligere nestlederen i Afghanistankomiteen, Petter Bauck. I ettertid kan en si at Astrid Morkens død

førte med seg et stort engasjement her hjemme i Norge. Et engasjement for bekjempelsen av miner i Afghanistan og resten av verden. Utover 1990-tallet er mineproblematikken kommet på dagsorden over hele verden. Her hjemme førte Astrid Morkens engasjement, og tragiske død, til at norske myndigheter begynte å bevilge penger til blant annet minerydding i Afghanistan på slutten av 1980-tallet, sier Bauck.

– Astrid Morkens Minnefond hadde en stor symbolsk effekt. I tillegg ble en god del midler samlet inn. Noe av fondets midler gikk blant annet til «Minerådiger - gruppen». I dag er dette en av de store organisasjonene som driver med minerydding over hele verden, forteller Bauck, som til daglig arbeider i NORAD.

## Astrid Morken.

Astrid Morken fra Skaun arbeidet som informasjonskonsulent og koordinator for den norske Afghanistankomiteen da hun ble drept av en landmine i Afghanistan i 1988. Lastebilen hun satt i kjørte på en mine i Paktia-provinsen, i nærheten av grensen til Pakistan. Både Morken og elleve afghanere omkom momentant. Astrid Morken hadde permisjon fra sitt arbeid som journalist i Adresseavisen og skulle arbeide i ett år som koordinator i Pakistan for Afghanistankomiteen.

Hennes engasjement for Afghanistan og det afghanske folkets lidelser, ble vekket under en reportasjereise til nettopp Paktia-provinsen i 1985. Hun var en av svært få vestlige journalister som var inne i Afghanistan under den sovjetiske okkupasjonen. Reportasjene hennes fra Afghanistan og fra flyktningleirene inne i Pakistan, gjorde store deler av det norske folk oppmerksom på hvilke grusomheter krigen førte med seg. Reportasjeturnen i 1985 førte også til at krigen fikk et ansikt: Toorjan. Den afghanske frihetskjemperen trengte en komplisert hjerneoperasjon hvis han skulle overleve. Astrid Morken tok han med seg hjem til Norge og Trondheim. Han fikk behandling på RiT., og senere fikk flere krigsskadede barn og frihetskjemper fra Afghanistan medisinsk hjelp på Regionskehuset i Trondheim – mye takket være Astrid Morkens engasjement.

Til tross for at Astrid Morken bare rakk å arbeide et par måneder som informasjonskonsulent og koordinator i Pakistan, fikk hun utrettet mye. Flere reportasjer ble sendt hjem til norske aviser, og det finnes ennå spor i Afghanistan etter Morken, blant annet eksisterer den dag i dag et vaksinasjonsprosjekt som hun var med på å bygge opp.



Uti Sandviken sitter Nina Marstein og legger kabal. Hun spiser knapt, og orker ikke jobbe med rapporten hun skulle gjort ferdig. Og hun vil i hvert fall ikke reise til Algerie.

Men Elisabeth Eide lar ikke Nina sitte der og deppe i fred. Vil ikke Nina oppsøke utfordringene, ja; så sørger Elisabeth for at utfordringene oppsøker Nina. Dermed får hun en afghansk asylsøkerfamilie på døren. Og Nina ville ikke vært Nina om hun unnlot å handle.

### Bergen, Sotra og Kabul

Med *Der mørket leker med tiden* har Elisabeth Eide, journalist, forfatter og eksil-bergener, skrevet sin tredje bok om Nina Marstein, journalist og «reisende i menneskerettigheter». De to første har hatt thrillerkarakter. Denne gangen ville Eide fokusere mindre på Nina som person, og dessuten skrive seg bort fra spenningsjangeren.

- Romanen er spennende. Men noen thriller er det ikke, sier forfatteren, som denne gangen har gitt stemme til hele fem hovedpersoner. Handlingen foregår i Peshawar, Kabul, Bergen og på Sotra.

- Hvorfor så mange fortellerstemmer?

- Det har nok sammenheng med forskningen jeg driver for tiden. Jeg håper å ta doktorgrad på medienes fremstilling av «de andre». De får sjelden være subjekter i sin egen historie, så jeg tenkte at de skal i hvert fall få være det i min roman. Istedenfor å se den gjennom Ninas slitne øyne, kunne det også være ok å la de se Nina gjennom sine øyne. Enhver selvgod nasjon har godt av å bli sett utenfra. Nina er ikke spesielt selvgod, men gjennom henne

ses også en del av det norske. I denne boken har jeg dessuten vært mer opptatt av å skildre folks sårbarhet. Både Ninas, når hun møter veggen, og flyktningenes. De fremstilles så lett som en kollektiv masse. Dette er et forsøk på å individualisere dem, med deres svakheter og styrker.

### Khadija, Ismael, Usman og Amina

Hvem er så de?

De heter Khadija, Ismael, Usman og Amina. Og mens Khadija er en sterk, sta, trassig og utadvendt kvinne som på tross av det meste overlever i Kabul med sine to barn, er Ismael en heller engstelig mann og slett ingen klassisk mujahedin med Kalashnikov-en over skulderen. Han er tvert imot ganske våpensky, en humanitær, intellektuell type, som også er homofil.

Usman er asylsøkeren som sammen med kone og barn oppsøker Nina. Han er Khadijas bror og som henne både stolt og sta, men han er også en vanskelig person, blant annet preget av den paranoiaen som preger mange krigsofre. Sist, men ikke minst, møter vi Usmans kone, Amina, en drømmer og poet, også hun krigsskadd, men på en annen måte enn mannen.

- Ingen av dem har noen entydig, reell modell. De er syntetiser av afghanere jeg har møtt, sier Elisabeth Eide.

- Og Nina?

- Hun er en nomadisk person som er kommet til det stadiet hvor hun føler seg mest hjemme i en humpende buss på det sentralasiatiske platået. Dessuten sliter hun med minner fra en barndom med en alkoholisert far.

### Dikte og lyge

Helt uten nomadiske trekk er heller ikke Elisabeth Eide. Betegnende nok har hennes 12

år gamle sønn allerede vært i 30 land. Deler av sine første leveår tilbrakte han i Peshawar i Pakistan.

Men mens Elisabeth flyttet fra Bergen til Oslo i 1984, er Nina trofast mot hjembyen og Sandviken, der hun bor i et kvinnekollektiv.

- Det drømmer jeg også om å gjøre - når jeg blir gammel, smiler Elisabeth. - Det fine med å være forfatter er jo at når vi først bare har dette ene livet, så kan vi dikte inn i bøkene de andre livene vi gjerne skulle levd.

- For en journalist må det også være besnærende å kunne lyge av hjertens lyst?

- Ja visst!

### Vil fortelle historier

- Som de to forrige, er også dette en politisk bok?

- Det er mulig den fungerer politisk. Men jeg vil først og fremst skrive historier. Jeg hadde et veldig behov for å skape disse menneskene. På reisene mine har jeg alltid arbeidet journalistisk, men det er så mye du ikke kan gjenskape gjennom reportasjer. Journalistikk på sitt beste er jeg veldig glad i, men journalistikken duger ikke for de lange fortellingene. Kan-skje heller ikke for de hele menneskene, sier Eide, som også underviser ved Journalistutdanningen ved Høgskolen i Oslo. Pluss at hun altså er i gang med det første av til sammen fire år med doktorgradsarbeid.

Om det også blir flere bøker om Nina, se; det vet ikke Elisabeth Eide.

- Jeg har noen prosjekter i hodet, men vet ikke om de inkluderer henne. Hun er jo en komfortabel skikkelse å arbeide litterært med. Gjennom tre bøker er jeg også blitt såpass knyttet til henne at jeg får litt separasjonsangst ved tanken på å slippe henne helt.

# Fra Kabul til Bergen

**TREDJE OM NINA** ■ Elisabeth Eide syntes Bergen trengte flere kirkeasylanter. Så hun gav Nina Marstein et problem og plasserte en afghansk familie i asyl i Korskirken.

DT 21-9-98

## 180 drept eller såret av raketter

**KABUL:** Rundt 180 mennesker ble drept og såret i flere raketangrep mot Afghanistans hovedstad Kabul søndag, ifølge en talsmann for Taliban-regimet. En rakett slo ned i folkemengden på et travelt marked og skal ha drept flere titalls personer. Taliban kontrollerer Kabul som ble utsatt for seks raketangrep fra fraksjonslederen Ahmed Shah Masoods stillinger nord for hovedstaden. En av raketene rammet bydelen Khair Khana og drepte 11 mennesker, 30 ble såret. Seks kvinner fra samme familie er blant de drepte, forteller innbyggere. Mange barn skal være såret.

«Blir det krig, skjærer iranerne gjennom Taliban som en kniv gjennom smør.»

Bergensavisen

16/9-98

# Afghanistans farlige grense

Blir det krig mellom Iran og Afghanistan? Og trekker et slikt oppgjør andre stater i området inn i konflikten og gjør den til en regional krig?

Det har gjæret lenge mellom Iran og Afghanistan. Iran domineres i dag av shiaretningen innen Islam, mens det er sunnimuslimer som fører an i Afghanistan.

Det største stammefolket i Afghanistan er pathanene med sentrum i den østlige delen av dette landet, men tadsjiker og hazarer spiller også en betydelig rolle.

Pathanene var da russerne involverte Afghanistan i 1979, et splittet stammefolket. Nabostaten til Afghanistan i øst, Pakistan, som i likhet med Iran ønsker avgjørende innflytelse i Afghanistan, satset i første omgang på pathanhøvdingen Gulbuddin Harnatyrar og hans krigere, mens tadsjiklederne Massoud og Rabbani ble understøttet av Iran og stammebrødre i det som den gangen var sovjetisk Tadsjikistan.

De forente stater understøttet Sovjet-Unionens mest effektive motstandere i Afghanistan, blant annet med Stingerraketter. De ødela mange av russernes kampfly og gjorde krigen i Afghanistan både kostbar og vanskelig for russerne. Sovjet gikk inn i Afghanistan for å gardere seg mot at stråmennene deres i dette landet distanserte seg fra Moskva og eliminerte sjansen for russerne til å rykke sørover.

Da russerne trakk seg ut av Afghanistan i 1989, begynte en ny og viktig fase i dette landets historie. Iran og Pakistan intensiverte kampen for å skaffe seg avgjørende innflytelse. Men begge parter opptrådte med stedfortredere. Pakistan skapte en hær av afghanske flyktninger og kalte den Taliban, og i løpet av kort tid har den erobret storparten av Afghanistan.

Situasjonen mellom Iran på den ene siden og Afghanistan og Pakistan på den andre tilspiss- et seg da Taliban rykket inn i byen Mazir-i-Sharif i den nordlige delen av Afghanistan. Under kampene der myrdet Taliban ti iranske diplomater og en iransk journalist som hadde søkt tilflukt i det iranske konsulatet i denne byen.

Iran reagerte hurtig. De iranske myndighetene underrettet Afghanistan om at de ifølge

internasjonal lov har rett til å sette i verk aksjoner mot Afghanistan, og for å understreke alvoret i situasjonen har Iran stasjonert cirka 70 000 veltriente soldater i grenseområdet. Amerikanske satellitter og britiske etterretningsfolk har konstatert at disse iranske troppene er utstyrt med effektive våpen. Pakistan har sørget for at en del av Talibanhæren har stridsvogner, artilleri og moderne håndvåpen, og at de har lært å bruke dem, men flere Talibanavdelinger er fremdeles mer og mindre tilfeldig sammenraskede ungdommer uten den nødvendige trening.

**- Blir det krig, skjærer iranerne gjennom Taliban som en kniv gjennom smør, sa en britisk observatør og ekspert i denne delen av verden.**

Etter at iranernes militærmanøvrer var offisielt slutt, meldte Irans radio at troppene ikke ville bli trukket tilbake. Samtidig ble det opplyst at det til elitekorpset hører et moderne og effektivt felthospital med 100 senger, en intensivavdeling, operasjonstelt og en blodbank. Det understreket iranernes militære beredskap.

For å ha det formelle for en militær straffeekspedisjon i orden har Iran bedt FN om å undersøke hva som er skjedd med de ti iranske diplomatene i Nazar-i-Sharif. Og hele tiden øker Iran troppeantallet ved grensen. 13. september var det kommet opp i cirka 200 000.

Taliban forbereder seg på et iransk angrep. Et ledd i dette er å utstyre befolkningen i Mimrozprovinsen på grensen mot Iran med håndvåpen for å skape en førstelinje mot et iransk angrep.

President Muhammad Khatami i Iran inntar et mer forsiktig standpunkt overfor Afghanistan enn ayatollah Khamenei. Sistnevnte er Irans åndelige leder og kontrollerer den mektige sikkerhetstjenesten, rettsapparatet og mange av statens rike og mektige firmaer.

Khamenei og de andre ledende ayatollahene er innstilt på å gi Afghanistan det de kaller en lærepenge. De har ikke spesifisert hva den består av, og de kommer stadig med uttalelser om at Profetens etterfølgere aldri har noe ondts fore, men, sier Taliban, hvis Iran bare har fredelige hensikter hvorfor har det da trukket sammen en hær med skremmende ildkraft ved grensen til Afghanistan?

## ● SYNSPUNKT

ALBERT  
HENRIK  
MOHN



## Over 40 sivile drept i Kabul <sup>BT</sup> 22/9-98

**KABUL:** Minst 40 sivile ble drept og mange andre såret, da ytterligere to raketter slo ned i Afghanistans hovedstad Kabul mandag. Nærmere 70 afghanere ble drept og over 200 såret i et tilsvarende angrep søndag. Innbyggerne i Kabul tror at rakettenes er blitt avfyrt av den regjeringsfiendtlige geriljalederen Ahmed Shah Masood, som kontrollerer områdene nord for byen. Disse opplysningene er blitt tilbakevist av en talsmann for Masood. Rakettenes mandag slo ned i et boligområde i den nordlige delen av Kabul. En to etasjers bygning raste sammen, og fire andre bygninger ble delvis ødelagt. (NTB-AFP-REUTER)

## «Landminer er uislamsk»

**ISLAMABAD:** Taliban-lederen mullah Mohammed Omar forbød tirsdag landminer i Afghanistan og kalte dem uislamske. I en erklæring fordømmer Omar all produksjon, handel, lagring og bruk av landminer, som omtales som uislamske og inhumane, ifølge den afghanske kampanjen for forbud mot landminer. Afghanistan er hardere rammet enn de fleste land når det gjelder landminer etter den lange sovjetiske okkupasjonen på 80-tallet og den påfølgende borgerkrigen. I erklæringen sier Omar også at Afghanistan er for et internasjonalt forbud mot landminer. På grunn av uenigheten om hvem som representerer landet i FN, kan Taliban imidlertid ikke undertegne Ottawa-avtalen om et forbud mot landminer. (NTB-REUTERS) *Bergens Tidene 19.10.98*



# Landet med ti millioner miner

**Afghanistan** er spekket med miner som daglig lemlestet uskyldige sivile. Men noen få modige nødljepsarbeidere forsøker å hjelpe ofrene.

Av CLAUDIA ULFERTS

«**D**et går så bra med deg!», Den italienske fysioterapeuten Alberto Cairo fra Røde Kors banker spøkefullt på den 17-årige Chahllullah kunstige ben. «Ser du på hvor godt du kan gå på benet? Jeg sa det jo til deg.» Gutten skviser uttrykk forsynnet, og han smiler til den magre, senete mannen. Så koncentrerer han seg igjen om det nye benet sitt og går. Treningsplanen i ortopediavdelingen telt ved siden av Wazir Akhtar Khan-sykehuset er omkring 15 me-

ter lang. Chahllullah traver frem og tilbake.

Nå blir det tent opp i en ovn. Vinden får den blå teltveggen til å blafre. Denne mandagen sitter 32 pasienter på to trebenker og venter på å komme til behandling.

De bærer turban og er innhyllet i tepper. Krykkene deres står len mot benken ved siden av dem. De fleste har trakkert på miner. Eksplosjonene har revet av leggene, hele det ene beinet eller begge ben.

Alberto Cairo kjemper hver pasien-



**Hjelpere med humor:** Alberto Cairo snakker begge de to offisielle språkene, og har en god spøk til alle, samme hvor store skader de har.

ens historie og snakker med dem på پشتو og dari, som er Afghanistans offisielle språk. Han setter seg på huk foran en ung mann som har fått venstre ben amputert over kneet, og legger begge hendene rundt den gatte, sammensyldte benstumpen.

«Har du husket å massere den hver dag?» spør han. «Det stimulerer blodomløpet, vet du.» Han trekker

en hvit nylonstrømpe over benstumpen før han breiter gummidelen av prosenen opp over den. «Er det betagelig slitt?»

**R**one Kors har hatt mange hjelpearbeidere i det krigsherjede Afghanistan siden 1980. Det ortopediske senterets verktøyd og behandlingsrom er innredet i en gammel gymnastikk sal hvor man før spilte volleyball, og i



**Gjenbrukt:** Kunnstige ben til lav pris lages av omsluttet plast.

noen forlatte frakontainere i den nordlige delen av hovedstaden Kabul.

«Det er ikke den beste løsningen», innrømmer Cairo. «Men vi kan i det minste arbeide her.»

Den 45-årige norditalieneren har vært i Afghanistan i åtte år nå – mye

lenger enn forventet for en hjelpearbeider. Normalt vender de hjem i løpet av et eller to år. Men Alberto Cairo deler uselvsk ut sin vennlighet og hjelp til alle som har bruk for den. «Ette gachaman spiser frokost sammen med Cairo hver dag», forteller ortopedten Frank Journer senere. «Han betaler også for skolgangen deres. Til gjengjeld venten han at de får gode karakterer.»

**D**EN ORTOPEDISKE AVDELINGEN har to ganger uten hell forsøkt å flytte til Ali-Abad-senteret ved siden av Kabul universitet, som ikke ble ødelagt under krigen. «Kort tid før vi skulle flytte i 1991, brøt det ut kamper mellom de islamske fundamentalistene og Mujahedin-bevegelsen om en del av byen. De skjøt bokstavelig talt rett over hodet på oss,» forteller Alberto Cairo.

Pasienter og personale måtte vende tilbake til containerne. I 1994 forsøkte de igjen å flytte, men denne gangen gikk det enda verre: «Soldatene gjorde lokaltene våre til hovedkvarter. De stjal alt, saget i stykker av el-generator og rev kablene ut av veggene for å få fart i kobberet.» Likvel lyfter det Røde Kors-folkene å redde fem hasechler med det vikingske utstyret under en våpenhvile.

**D**ET ER ALLTID TRAVELT I DEN ortopediske avdelingen. Idet re i Kabul fikk 1227 mennesker foretatt amputasjoner i 1997, finner det tallmateriale i skrivebordsskuffen sin: «I fjor ble 507

soldater ofre for minen. Resten var uskyldige sivile: 224 bønder som arbeidet på åkrerne som enda ikke var ryddet for minen, 112 personer som var ute for å samle brensel, 90 barn som lekte og 77 gister. Og 49 personer trakk på minen da de vendte tilbake til sine tidligere hjem.»

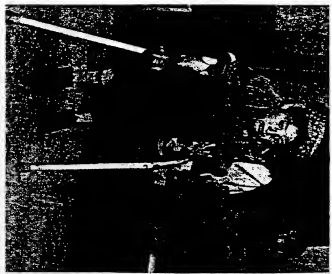
Afghanistan er sammen med Kamboisja og Angola blant de mest minelagte land i verden. Det finnes anagelig over ti millioner minner skjult i jorden her. Ingen kjenner det nøyaktige antallet, for gjennom 19 års krig er det ene laget med minner blitt lagt oppå det andre.

**E**N STOR DEL AV MINERNE stammer fra den ti år lange sovjetiske okkupasjonen. I kampen mot den islamske motstandsbevegelsen Mujahedin droppet Den røde armé utallige av de såkalte «sommerflughinnene» i de områdene som opprørerne kontrollerte. De er ikke større enn skålen til en te-kopp, men har en ytterst destruktiv effekt. På grunn av den sommerflughaktige formen er det særlig barn som er blitt lemlestet av dem, fordi de trodde det var leketoys.

Men det ble ikke fred i landet etter av sovjettroppene trakk seg ut i 1989. En borgerkrig blusset opp. I begynnelsen av 1990-årene baglet bomber og granater ned over Kabul, mens islamske fundamentalister klemte intens mot ministerpresident Rahbani overgangsregjering. I 1994 lå mer 70 prosent av hovedstaden i ruiner. Militser opprettet ho-

vekkvarer i de bydelene de hadde erobret. Når de ble runget vekke, minna de alle husene så ferdig ikke kunne bruke dem.

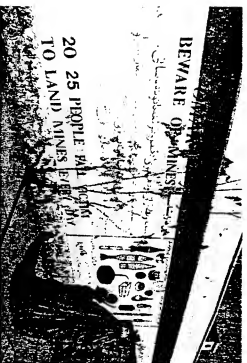
«I stedet rammet mine sine sivilbe-



**På bona igjen:** Med oppmunnting og trening kan man lære seg å gå.

folkeningen når de vendte hjem og ga seg til å rydde opp,» sier Alberto Cairo. Er det ikke lett å miste motet og tvile på nyten av sitt arbeid i en slik situasjon? «Nei,» svarer Cairo bestemt. «Måne åtte år her har lært meg å tenke positivt. Når jeg ser et mineoffer, tenker jeg straks på når og hvordan pasienten kan komme til å gå igjen. Ellers ville jeg sikkert gå fra forstanden.»

Noen blir ofre for minen to og til og med tre ganger, og hver gang vender de tilbake til Alberto Cairo – som den mannen som først mistet et



**Krigens pris: 20-25 mennesker blir ofre for skjulte landminer hver eneste dag.**

øye, deretter en arm, og så et ben etter å ha trukket på en tredje mine. «Likevel spøkte jeg med det og spurte hva han regnet å miste neste gang.» Denne galgenhumoren er ofte det beste middel mot sjokket, sier Cairo.

De fleste ofre er unge – mellom 20 og 30 år – og over 80 prosent er menn. «Bortsett fra skadene er de sunne og sterke og svært motivert for å delta i treningen», sier han. De leier arbeider, og pasientene lærer raskt å bruke sine kunstige lemmer.

**S**ELV PRISKE MENNESKER I Kabil må kjempe for å overleve. Fabrikker er ødelagte, kornåker er svidd av og forrettingsstørker er brutt sammen. Byen er helt avhengig av internasjonale hjelpeorganisasjoner. Mer enn 750 000 av Kabulis innbyggere – så godt som to tredjedeler av befolkningen – får mat

gjennom nødhjelpsgjennomgangen. Røde Kors deler ut mel, ris, bønner og sukker til omtrent 40 000 nødstilte familier, heriblant enker og de som er blitt handikappet av krigen. Likevel er mange henvist til å klare seg selv.

Malward avtryk, som en gang var Kabuls mest elegante boulevard, er i dag forandlet til en av byens største basarer for brukte varer. Langs hele

gaten er husene istrykkskutt og utbrent og står med gapende vinduer. Men gatelarmen er voldsom. Russiske Volgagr skramler forbi, hestehover klipper, og syklistar og folk med trekkvogner maser seg vei frem gjennom mylderet ved å krime med bjellene og rope og banne. Kvinner som er tilsatt fra topp til tå, siter på bakken. Selv øyene deres er skjult av en slags nettsnase. De selger brukt tøy.

Siden den ytterliggende islamiske Taliban-militsen overtok makten i Kabul i september 1996, skal alle kvinner gå med slør utover hjemmet. Og de får ikke engang ferdes ute uten å være ledsaget av en mann. Kvinner har ikke lov til å arbeide, unntatt som sykepleiere. De lønnevenninger enker som ikke har noen forsørgjer, til å selge sine hjem og eiendeler.

Fattigdommen er stor. En gammel mann falbyr to tepper som han

har bunnet fast til bogsjebrettet på sykelen sin. Arbeidsløse familiefelle sløper rundt med skramlende gryter, tekaner og kofferter fullt av lukter. Noen av dem forsøker til og med å selge segene sine. «Likevel holder de alle fast ved håpet om at tilreiselen blir bedre en dag», sier Mohammad Azam, som ledager oss.

Det er tiggere over alt. Noen av dem er til og med akademikere, profesorer og universitetslærere. Nesten alle læranstalter er blitt lukket, fordi regjeringen mangler penger. «Et verdig liv under menneskelige forhold er ikke lenger mulig her», sukker Mohammad Azam.

**H**IN ISKALD inn i Kabul

vestlige bydel Khushal Mena. Røde vippler smeller mot de sammenhengsmessige murene. De markerer farlige områder. I de siste tre ukene har mineryddere vært i gang med å grave gjennom kvartene. Operasjonens leder, den 24-årige Fazal Ahmad, og fire kolleger finkjenner hver kvadrant av det tidligere boligkvarteret for å finne miner og udetonerte granater. Fazal avmerker møyp-

tig på et kart hvilke områder som er ryddet: «bare en måneds arbeid til», anslår han. Så kan beboerne vende tilbake til husene sine.

Den 27-årige Amraddin er medlem av Fazals gruppe. Han trekker beskyttelseshyllene på hjelmen ned foran øyene og gir sin skatter 25 meter lene. «Søk, søk!»



**Hundesøler Schæferen snuser seg frem til minene.**

oppfordrer han. Hundene løper ivig frem og tilbake med snuten tett ned i bakken. Et par minutter senere setter den seg rett ned og ventur. Amraddin kolliderer på en metalldetektor søke over jorden. Den hviter som et tannlegebor. «Det ligger noe ned der!» advarer han.

Amraddin tar «følteren», en lang stikk som er formet som en skrutrekker. Så stikker han den for-



sikring på skrå ned i jorden inntil han har lokalisert minen. Han må ikke berøre den ovenfra, for detonatoren (udløsermekanismen) sitter øverst opppe. Amranaddin avmerker stedet med en ring av små steiner. «Vi overlater den til dearmningslaget.»



**Forbrygende arbeid:** Barna lærer å forholde seg til minner.

forklarer han. «De uskadeliggjør den senere.»

Fazal snakker så rolig om arbeidet sitt at man kunne tro han diskuterte været. Han har allerede opplevd elevene unøll siden han begynte

som minerydder for fire år siden. Statistisk sett blir hver tiende minerydder selv offer på et eller annet tidspunkt. Fazal erklærer at han ikke reddet, men han er ikke totalblottet for følelser i det farlige arbeidet sitt.

I flor ryddet han minner i en landsby syd for Kabul. «Jeg hørte et høyt brak og begynte å løpe. Først roddet jeg at en sau hadde trakkert på en mine, men så fant jeg en liten hånd.» Den tilhørte en 12-årig gutt som minen hadde revet i filler. For Fazal var det «som om min lillebror var blitt drept». Man kunne være enda grunligere med å advare barn mot minner, sier han.

**V**ERDEN SITU. nødljelpsorganisasjonen OMAAR minerydder-skole fører gjennom en labyrint av små smug. En liten jekte med et rødt tørkle på hodet åpner døren til skoleen. I det halvmørke klasserommet underviser den 22-årige Sarah 14 barn og seks kvinner i å omgå minner. Hun holder opp en håndgranat og spør: «Hva skal dere gjøre hvis dere finner en slik en?» En gutt på omtrent åtte år reiser seg fra trebenken sin og skynder seg frem foran klassen. Hun løfter hendene i været i påakt forførelse. Så løser hun seg og samler stein og legger i en sirkel omkring granaten.

«Riktig», sier Sarah. «Tøyst avmerker dere minen, og deretter forteller dere alle kamraterne deres at de må holde seg vekk fra stedet.» Hun ber to gutter med amputerte

ben om å komme frem foran klassen og fortelle hva som kan skje når en mine eksploderer. De andre barna sitter musestilte og lytter.

**A**LLEBART CAIRO åpner døren til det ortopediske verkstedet. Slipeskinner hviter og luften er fylt av støv. Over 60 alghafnere som er opplært av Røde Kors, er i full gang med å hamre, høyle og sage. De lager 400 proteser, 5000 par krykker og 70 rullestoler innånden.

Cairo tar en fot laget av furu fra høvelbenken og fisker et stykke gummi opp av en eske. «Støtdemper til hølen», roper han gjennom larmen. «Gummien stammer fra gamle russiske stridsvogner.» I et hjørne står en smeltetovn beregnet til gummelplast. «Vi lager vår egne proteser ved hjelp av denne her», sier Cairo og holder en protese i været. «De første kom fra Genève og var utrolig dyre, opp til 13 500 kroner stykket. Nå kan vi selv fremstille dem til under 700 kroner.»

Siden 1993 har Røde Kors bare ansett handikappede arbeidere på det ortopediske verkstedet. Det har sin gode grunn, forklarer Cairo: «Vi kan ikke bare utstyre en pasient med en protese og si: Farell, vi sees fortløpendigvis aldri igjen!» Cairo's brune øyne glitter. «Det er også godt for de øvrige offrene. De oppdager at livet går videre. For de ser at legen, fysioterapeuten og deres kolleger



**Verkstødt:** Alle proteser lages her.

også manglet et ben, men stadig utfører arbeidet sitt perfekt.»

Mohammad Sediq, som er leder av det ortopediske verkstedet, siterte til tingene i Tyskland for 26 år siden og snakker feilfritt tysk. «Jeg er glad for at jeg kan arbeide her,» sier han. «Det finnes ingen ting utenfor dette verkstedet.» Han peker på Cairo, som allerede er gift vider. «Han er en alle tiders siffer. Han hjelper alle. Han var den eneste som ble her i begynnelsen av 90-årene da krigen var riktig ille. Den gangen delte han og jeg ut mat. Nå kommer dager fikk vi hverken vatt eller lørt fra syv om morgenen til klokken åtte om kvelden. Jeg tror ikke Alberto noen gang kan få seg til å forlate Afghanistan. Han ville bli syk uten arbeidet sitt og menneskene her.»

Derksom dere ønsker fred, så forsvær livet.

— PAUL PAUL VI

# Fundamentalistene i Afghanistan

## DE KALLER DET

Da den muslimske fundamentalistiske gruppen Taliban okkuperte hovedstaden Kabul for snart to år siden, ble kvinnes liv forandret over natten. Alle jenter ble tatt ut av skolen og alle kvinner mistet retten til å arbeide. De levde i frykt og må leve tilsørt fra topp til tå. Likevel for noen forsøker de å leve om et moderne folk som ble tvunget tilbake til middelalderen.

THIRNEJUNGAS

**N**azrin (32) sitter inntullet i et teppe. Hun er en av Kabuls 30 000 krigsenker. Bak henne sitter sønnen Bashir og ser på henne med store, triste øyne.

- Jeg hadde så mange drømmer, sier hun stille.

I dag klarer hun ikke å tenke lenger enn til hverdagens små utfordringer, som å skaffe litt mat eller noen klær til ni-åringen sin.

Vi er i Afghanistans hovedstad Kabul, og det er ramadan, muslimenes hellige måned. Da er det ikke lov å spise eller drikke mens det er dagslys. Men nå går det mot kveld, og fasten kan brytes. Nazrin spiser likevel ingenting.

- Jeg har ikke spist på tre dager. Vi faster fordi vi ikke har mat.

I går kveld stjal hun noen dråper matolje fra søsteren sin slik at hun kunne lage litt mat til sønnen.

- Det er forferdelig å stjele fra sin egen familie, ikke å ha mat til barna sine. Jeg har vært så deprimeret at jeg har hatt lyst til å ta livet av meg. Men jeg vil ta vare på sønnen min. Jeg vil heller dø enn å se ham sulte.

For 1 1/2 år siden jobbet Nazrin som lærer i naturfag. Hun hadde god lønn og egen leilighet. Helt til byen ble okkupert av Taliban, en gruppe erkereaksjonære sunnimuslimer. I løpet av noen dager mistet hun jobben sin, hjemmet sitt - og alle drømmene sine. Det samme gjorde 25 000 andre kvinner, så godt som hele Kabuls kvinnelige arbeidsstyrke.

- Jeg ante ingenting om Taliban før de plutselig dukket opp. Da jeg hørte om de nye lovene, trodde jeg nesten ikke mine egne ører. Jeg bare gråt. En av bevegelsens første regler var å gjeninnføre burkaen, som skal innhylle kvinnen fra fot til isse. Siste gang det var påbudt var i 1959.

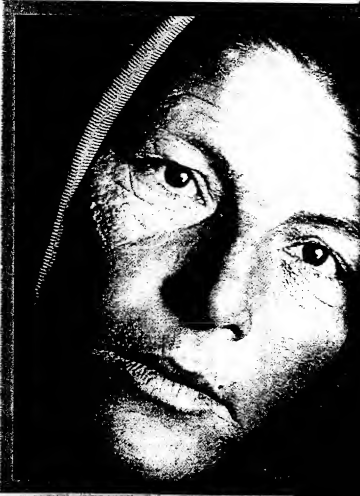
### MISTET JOBBEN

Taliban beordret alle kvinner til å holde seg hjemme fra jobben, og Nazrin og kollegene hennes regnet med at det bare var en overgang. Det nærmet seg semesterslutt, og elevene holdt på med eksamen. Nazrin begynte å forberede seg til et nytt skoleår.

- Men det ble fort verre, forteller hun.

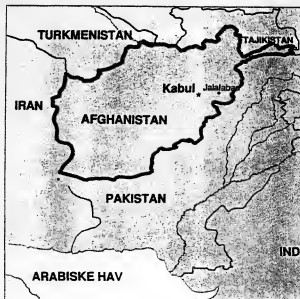
- Etter én uke stoppet de lønnsutbetalingen. Jeg måtte flytte fra leiligheten min siden den tilhørte skolen. Nazrin tok med seg Bashir og tingene sine og flyttet hjem til faren sin, som hadde et lite gjesterom. Snart var hun blakk.

- Jeg måtte selge alt jeg hadde på markeder og i bruktbutikker for å få penger til mat. Til og med klærne mine. ▶



Parwin er en av Kabuls 30 000 krigsenker. Hun bor sammen med sine to døtre og sin mor, som har kreft, og må tigge på gaten for å forsørge dem.

Enkelte navn og detaljer i denne artikkelen er blitt forandret for å beskytte kvinnene det gjelder.



## FAKTA OM AFGHANISTAN

Afghanistan har en befolkning på 18 millioner. Seks millioner av dem er flyktninger som lever i Iran eller Pakistan. 76 prosent av den voksne befolkningen er analfabeter, og forventet levealder er 42 år. Barnedødeligheten er 30 prosent.

24. desember 1989 ble Afghanistan invadert av sovjetiske styrker. Landet hadde lenge lidd under borgerkriger, og sovjeterne ønsket å støtte den pro-sovjetiske delen av landet. Resultatet var en blodig krig, og først 10 år senere, 15. februar 1989, trakk de siste sovjetiske soldatene seg ut av landet. Men freden ble kortvarig. Kampene mellom rivaliserende islamistiske grupperinger blusset fort opp igjen. Målet var kontroll over hovedstaden Kabul. I 1994 fikk den religiøse bevegelsen Taliban kontroll over den sørlige delen av landet. I 1997 okkuperte de Kabul, etter mange blodige kamper. I dag kontrollerer Taliban 90 prosent av landet. Bevegelsen har sitt utspring i det tradisjonelle islamske nettverket av mullaher (musliske skriftlærde). De har stått for religionsformidling i Afghanistan gjennom århundrer. Taliban har en grunnleggende fiendtlighet mot det moderne samfunn og ønsker ingen sosiale, politiske eller økonomiske reformer. Koranen er rettensnoren, og Taliban er tilhenger av den mest ortodokse tolkningen.

En gang dro hun tilbake til skolen for å ta seg av noe papirarbeid.

- Taliban fulgte etter meg. De truet med å kappe av meg beina hvis jeg kom dit flere ganger.

Nå bor Nazrin og sønnen i en pappeske. Der lager de mat, spiser og sover. Ansiktet hennes, som for ikke lenge siden var vakker, er preget av sult og desperasjon.

- Hva skal jeg gjøre for å skaffe penger? Jeg gjør hva som helst, vasker hus eller klær, men det er ingen jobber få. Jeg får meg ikke til å tigge på gaten - jeg har høy utdanning!



Sharifa, som ikke lenger har lov til å jobbe som vaskehjelp, løper gjennom bakgatene i nærheten av hjemmet sitt. Som alle andre kvinner risikerer hun straff for å ikke bruke burkaen på offentlig sted.

Sinnet bryter igjennom tårene.

- Taliban er ikke menneskelige. De er hjerteløse og følelseskalde. De er analfabeter! Hun spytter ut ordet som om det skulle være en forbannelse. En rasende anklage fra Kabuls intelligente og utdannede kvinner.

## EN NY MUSLIMSK STAT

Taliban (ordet betyr «søkende» eller «studenter») kom natten til 27. september 1997. Motstanderne deres hadde flyktet. Kabuls innbyggere var ikke klar over at de var okkupert før de hørte det på radioen neste morgen. Radio Afghanistan var blitt til Radio Sharia (sharia betyr islamsk lovgivning etter Koranen), som proklamerte en ny islamsk stat. Kvinner ble beordret til å holde seg inne. De skulle være hos familiene sine og hadde ikke lenger lov til å gå på jobb eller utenfor huset uten ektemannen. De måtte dekke seg med en burka, en teltlignende, fotsid drakt med et nettverk av heklede hull foran øynene.

Taliban er en religiøs militær gruppe som ønsker å gjeninnføre fundamentalistisk islam. De krever at landet vender tilbake til sine eldgamle kulturelle tradisjoner, der kvinner lever tildekket og ikke kan omgås menn. De har mange tilhengere på landsbygda, der de har hatt kontroll i flere år. Kabul sto igjen som den siste skanse. Mange afghanere reagerte negativt på at byen var preget av det de anså for å være destruktivt vestlig innflytelse. I løpet av krigen mot Russland hadde Kabul mer eller mindre adoptert Sovjetunionens anti-islamske ideer, mente de. Og kvinnene førte an i fristelsen, med korrupsjon og blodsutgytelser som følge.

Det er fortsatt Talibans militære styrker som bestemmer. Moralmilitsen er overalt, utstyrt med maskingevær og stålkanaler, alltid beredt til å utføre spontane og offentlige avstraffelser.

## MANGE FORBUD

Menn har ikke lenger lov til å gå i vestlige klær. Det er ikke lov å barbere seg, og langt skjegg er påbudt. Kontroller er vanlige. Politiet gnir et håndkle over skjegget, og er det tegn til løse hår etter barbering, fører det til pryl på stedet. Panneluggen må imidlertid være så kort at den ikke berører teppet når man ber. Homoseksualitet og prostitusjon er ulovlig.

For kvinner er lovene enda strengere. Alle skoler og universiteter er stengt for kvinner. Det er ikke lov å jobbe utenfor hjemmet; det eneste unntaket er hvis man er på en arbeidsplass der man bare møter andre kvinner. Kvinner har ikke lov til å snakke med menn de ikke er i familie med og kan ikke delta i sosiale sammenkomster, med unntak av brylluper og begravelser, der menn og kvinner holdes strengt atskilt. Alle vestlige klær og all sminke er forbudt, og det rapporteres at kvinner har fått skåret opp leppene hvis de bruker leppestift. Høye hæler, sko som klapper og sandaler uten sokker i er forbudt, for det kan distrahert menn. Alle offentlige bad og toaletter er stengt for kvinner, som heller ikke kan få utstedt pass eller andre identitetspapirer.

I begynnelsen var det noen kvinner som protesterte åpenlyst. De ble prylt på åpen gate. Noen ble satt i fengsel og noen forsvant. I dag er det ingen som tør å gjøre opprør.

- Vi er for redde, forklarer en kvinne.





lige hjelpeorganisasjoner. Andre sitter hjemme, dypt deprimerede over sin egen hjelpeløshet. Det er strengt forbudt å ta bilde av eller snakke til noen av kvinnene. Det er heller ikke lov å oppsøke noen hjemme. Da vi var på besøk, ble vi utstyrt med en translator og en sjåfør som skulle passe på at vi ikke brøt noen av reglene. Vi var ikke så redde for det. Men de kvinnene som likevel ville snakke med oss og la oss ta bilde av dem, tok en stor sjanse. Men det er den eneste måten verden kan få høre deres historie på. Det har hendt at kvinner som har snakket med journalister har forsvunnet. Noen er blitt prylt, det samme har skjedd med dem som har hjulpet dem.

#### FRA KJENDIS TIL INGENTING

Shafika Habibi var i mange år Afghani-stans mest kjente kvinne. Hun var nyhetsoppleser på tv, helt til Taliban tok fra henne jobben. I dag lever hun et helt anonymt liv.

**Mange av vennene mine har tatt livet av seg. Noen ganger forgifter de barna også, eller selger dem**

SHARIFA (40), SEKSBARNSMOR



All musikk er forbudt, med unntak av religiøse sanger uten akkompagnement. Biler er stadig utsatt for razziaer, og alle kassetter blir inndratt på stedet. Noen ganger blir sjåføren bundet med båndet fra sine egne kassetter. Alle kvinner er stengt og noen er blitt brent ned. Hvis noen bryter forbudene, blir de slått over ryggen eller beina med en stakabel.

#### EN BY I FORFALL

Nå kan man kjøre gjennom Kabul i dag, ser man tegn på revolusjonen overalt. For to år siden var dette en vestlig inspirert by med et sydende natteliv. Unge menn gikk i olabukser og kvinner gikk med kjoler eller korte skjørt. Kvinnene studerte, hadde jobber og kjørte bil.

I dag ligger halvparten av Kabuls bygninger i ruiner. Kvinner iført burka, mange av dem krigsunker, må tigge på gaten. De kan ikke lenger jobbe og tjene penger til mat. Mange sitter midt i veien og blokkerer trafikken, med barn i fanget. En gammel kvinne plukker ugress i grøttekanten, noe som kan spises.

Blant tiggeerne er både lærere og universitetslektorer. Nesten halvparten av byens 1,2 millioner innbyggere får hjelp fra vest-

Shafika hadde jobbet i fjernsynet i årtier. Hun hadde eksklusive klær og var gift med en vellykket diplomat. De bodde i et stort hus med tjenere. Men da kampene begynte, måtte de flytte. Nå bor Shafika og mannen i en kald og fuktig, gammel leilighet.

- Dette er mine minner, forteller Shafika og viser fram utklippsboken og fotoalbumet sitt. Der er hun med langt flagrende hår og kort selskapskjole i samtale med den tidligere franske presidenten Georges Pompidou. Der er hun med regjeringsmedlemmer iført pelskåpe og kort skjørt. Der er hun med ektemannen, stolt og selvsikker, ved sin side. I dag er han en skygge av seg selv, der han nervøst smyger seg gjennom rommet iført vide klær og pistrete skjegg.

- Det er harde tider nå, hvisker han på fransk.

- Da Taliban kom, ble jeg og de 300 andre kvinnene som jobbet på tv-stasjonen bedt om å gå hjem, forteller Shafika. - Ingen av oss regnet med at det skulle være. Kvinnene er blitt sendt i under jorda, og det blir en lang kamp for å få igjen våre posisjoner.

I Taliban-regimets første dager ble kvin-

ner slått hvis de ikke bar slør, husker hun. I den perioden var det best å holde seg helt innendørs. Shafika hadde ikke brukt burka siden hun gikk på skolen, og kjente ikke igjen venninnene sine, ikke engang når de satt ved siden av hverandre på bussen.

- Følelsen av tapt identitet er vanskelig. Når jeg tar bussen, er konduktøren trekk og uhøflig. Før smilte de og fortalte stolt at de hadde Shafika Habibi på bussen sin. Shafika sitter på gulvet og snakker om tiden før Taliban, da kvinnene i Aghani-stan gradvis fikk flere rettigheter.

#### EN ANNEN VERDEN

- Jeg begynte å jobbe i tv rundt 1960. Det var gode tider. Utviklingen var positiv for kvinner, helt til Taliban kom. Når hun ser tilbake, lurer hun på om hennes generasjon gikk for langt:

- På slutten av 70-tallet, da kommunismene tok over, ble alt vestlig inspirert: klærne, maten, livsstilen. Men det var bare her i Kabul. Resten av landet, analfabete, lever i en annen verden. Det som skjer nå er en reaksjon på dette.

Bildene hennes viser utviklingen. Etter 1992 og kommunismens fall, ble det innført moderate muslimske regler. Kvinner måtte være tildekket, men ikke helt tilslørt. Hun viser oss et bilde der hun leser nyheten iført et skjørt over håret.

- Siden 1996 virker det som om tiden har stått stille, sier hun. - Mentalt er det en svært vanskelig situasjon for kvinner. Shafika og venninne hennes har jevnlig møter i huset hennes, og de er i forbindelse med Taliban om å få utbetalt noe av lønnen sin, selv om de ikke kan begynne å jobbe igjen. Men de fleste av Shafikas venner venter ikke på at ting skal bli bedre. 70 prosent av den utdannede befolkningen har flyktet fra landet.

- Jeg tror jeg blir, fordi jeg er en religiøs kvinne. Jeg tror at enhver skjebne avgjøres av Gud. Karrieren min er over. Jeg er ikke lenger den jeg var. Jeg er siltet. Det jeg ønsker nå, er å gjøre noe som kan hjelpe unge kvinner. Nå har de ingen framtid, jeg må kjempe for dem, ellers mister vi en hel generasjon.

#### TRAUMATISK OPPVEKST

I et lite rom på et hemmelig sted leser en liten pike på ca fire år høyt fra lesebokken sin. Hun er nervøs og snubler i ordene.

Klassen lær, men hun fortsetter. Hun er elev i en undergrunnskole, en av de mange hundre som arrangeres hjemme hos privatpersoner eller i forlatte hus. Det er et lite opprør, men det gir mødrene håp. Lærerne er stolte av barnas arbeider, men er også livredde for at Taliban skal oppdage dem og stenge skolen.

Byens barn har opplevd mye vondt. I løpet av årene med krig har 40 prosent mistet en mor eller far, 25 prosent har mistet en bror eller søster, 95 prosent har sett slåsning, og mange av dem igjen har sett mennesker bli drept av bomber. 73 prosent er redde for at de vil dø før de blir voksne.



Fersitta, en 25 år gammel tidligere ingeniørstudent, vil at vi tar bilde av henne mens hun står foran speilet og sminker seg. Det er hennes opprør. Makeup er forbudt, selv om man bruker det under burkaen.

- For oss er dette en liten måte å protestere på. Vi gjør det vi kan, sier hun. Når Fersitta tar av seg sløret, ser vi en slående vakker ung kvinne med klar hud og langt, brunt hår. Hun sminker seg ikke for å få oppmerksomhet fra menn, men for å styrke selvtiliten. - Jeg ønsker å få livet mitt tilbake og få lov til å arbeide.

Fersitta finner styrke og trøst hos venninnene sine. De har lært seg å gjenkjenne hverandre under burkaene ved å se på skoene eller måten de beveger seg på. De er frustrerte fordi de ikke lenger har den friheten som er andre kvinner forunt.

- Vi gråt da vi ble tvunget til å bruke burka. Det er vanskelig å gå med den, for du ser ikke hvor du går. En gang da jeg hadde brettet ned burkaen for ikke å snuble, ble jeg stoppet av Taliban, som slo meg med en stålkebøl. Da jeg spurte hvordan de kunne slå en kvinne, bare lo de av meg og slo meg igjen. Det var vondt og ydmykende. Det var mange mennesker som sto og så på, men ingen turde å hjelpe meg. Fersitta var flink på skolen og hadde mange drømmer for framtiden.

- Na tilbringer jeg mesteparten av tiden

hjemme og leser. Det virker som om ting blir verre. Det blir flere tiggere for hver dag som går. Jeg har til og med sett lærere fra universitetet tigge på gaten. Det er trist og vanskelig å akseptere at det skal være slik. Hun gråter når vi går.

Et annet sted, i en annen leilighet, treffer vi Najibi (18) som flere ganger har vurdert å begå selvmord. Skolen måtte hun forlate rett før eksamen. Men broren hennes får fortsatt lov å gå.

- Jeg var alltid den mest skoleflinke av oss, så han er fornøyd med tingenes tilstand. Han ler hver dag når han drar av gårde.

For tre måneder side tok hun en overdose. - Jeg ønsket virkelig å dø. Jeg skrev en lapp til moren min, så svelget jeg et glass med sovetabletter og gikk og la meg. Men mamma kom uventet hjem og fant lappen. Hun klarte å få meg til å kaste opp tabletten. Broren min var sint. «Neste gang får du kaste deg foran en bil så det ser ut som en ulykke, sa han. «Selvmord bringer skam over familien.»

- Selvmordsstatistikken for kvinner er sterkt økende, forteller en lege vi snakket med i Kabul. - Den vanligste metoden er å ta kaustisk soda. Det er et lett tilgjengelig gift, men det er en langsom og smertefull måte å dø på. Mange kvinner tar også livet av seg med lommekniver.

## MENN FØRST

I Kabul er det nesten umulig å finne en kvinne som støtter Taliban, men ellers i landet er millioner av mennesker glade for det som har skjedd. I Jalalabad, like ved grensen til Pakistan, står folket etnisk og kulturelt nærmere de sør-afghanske stammene, der Taliban-bevegelsen begynte. Her er Taliban blant venner.

Anisa (40) er jordmor på sykehuset i byen. Hun syns det er riktig at menn skal ha første prioritet når de gjelder jobb og utdanning. Hun mener at Taliban bare gjeninnfører de tradisjonelle lover og regler, og at det i det lange løp er til fordel for kvinnene.

Anisa er gravid med sitt 10. barn. Hun innrømmer at hun er heldig siden hun er helseutdannet og dermed kan fortsette å jobbe.

- Men Taliban har lovet at når freden kommer, vil kvinner få utdanning og lov til å jobbe, selv om det blir under «muslimske» betingelser. Det er bra at kvinner har jobb. Men når det ikke er nok jobber, må menn få dem, mener hun.

- I det afghanske samfunnet har mannen mye ansvar. De må ta vare på andre. De må tjene penger. Koranen krever at kvinnene skal være tilsørt, ikke at de må bruke burka. Men burka er vår tradisjon. Det er viktigst å bruke den i store byer, hvor det

Det er vanskelig å  
for det

# unget til å bruke burka. ed den, ikke hvor du

ERSITTA (25)

er mange fremmede. I små landsbyer ser du nesten ingen kvinner med burka. Da er de er blant familie og naboer.

Vi spør Anisa om kvinnene i Kabul; de som har mistet jobben og bekymrer seg for framtiden.

- I Kabul var innbyggerne venner med russerne og ble påvirket av det vestlige, sier hun. Og legger til at i Jalalabad er det bare fem prosent av kvinnene som klager.

- Taliban er opptatt av kvinners rettigheter. Det er viktig for dem at vi er fornøyd.

Afghanske menn liker kvinner. De vil at vi skal ha det bra.

Politimesteren i Jalalabad er også opptatt av å forklare eventuelle misforståelser. Mens vi snakker med ham, er det vanskelig å la være se på veggen over skrivebordet hans, der det henger et tykt lærbelte med trehåndtak. Det er til avstraffelser, men ikke *alvorlige* avstraffelser, forklarer assistenten hans hjelpsomt. Det «ordentlige» har stått inni.

Politimesteren, Maulawi Niq Mohammed, sier at kvinner skal «leve som grever i hjemmet sitt». De kan velge sin ektemann og sine eiendeler. Mannens ansvar er å sørge for at kvinnen har alt hun trenger. Vi har lyst til å spørre om kvinners rettigheter under Taliban-regimet, men Mohammed er mer opptatt av å snakke om sex og korrupsjon i Vesten.

Kvinner på markedet i sentrum av Kabul.

- Vi har for mange analfabeter, sier han. - Det eneste som nytter er en fullstendig rekonstruksjon av landets økonomi, med vestlig hjelp. Forbudet mot at kvinner skal få arbeide og ta utdanning er bare midlertidig, hevder han, i likhet med alle de andre i Taliban vi snakket med.

For Sharifa, som er vaskehjelp i Kabul, hjelper det lite å løse problemer på et politisk plan. Hun sliter med akutt dårlig økonomi. I fjor måtte hun å tigge på gaten. Det var ikke lenger noen jobber å få. Vi får lov til å komme inn i leiligheten hennes og ta bilder av henne, men fotografen må skjule seg bak en burka når hun går inn i bygningen. Sharifa er bare 40 år, men ser ut som om hun er minst 50. Håret er matt, ansiktet er dradd og tennene råtnet. Hun bor sammen med fem døtre – den eldste er 25 – og sitt yngste barn, en sønn på tre år, som stadig dunker hodet i gulvet og åpenbart er psykisk utviklingshemmet.

Sharifa forteller hvordan hun fikk vaskejobb gjennom et illegalt firma. Lønnen er dårlig, men hun slipper i hvert fall å tigge. Mange av vennene hennes har tatt livet av seg.

- Det skjer ofte når kvinnene ikke har mat til familien sin. De blander gift i maten, og noen ganger forgifter de barna sine også. Mange selger også barna sine. Ikke fordi de ikke er glad i dem, men fordi de ikke har råd til å beholde dem.

Selgerne på markedene i Kabul bekrefter at dette skjer:

- De håper at hvis de kan selge ett av barna, kanskje en datter som kan bli en god hustru, har de råd til mat til seg selv og de andre barna, forteller en av kles-selgerne.

En annen selger forteller at han en gang så en far med to barn, en sønn og en datter, som han tigget forbi passerende om å kjøpe. En taxistjefor tilbød seg omsider å hjelpe ham. Da han tok med seg barna over gaten, rev den niårige jenta seg fri for å løpe tilbake til faren – og havnet under hjulene på en lastebil full av Taliban-soldater. Soldatene hoppet gråtende ut av bilen: «Vi har drept datteren din, nå kan du drepe oss», sa de. Faren overså dem, han bare grep hardt tak i sønnen sin. «Deg slipper jeg aldri,» sa han.

Til tross for alle forbudene blir det stadig flere tiggere og prostituerte i Kabul. Kvinner gjør hva som helst for å få penger til mat, selv om de kan bli straffet med døden.

Vi spurte Sharifa hvilke håp hun hadde for framtiden. I likhet med de andre kvinnene vi snakket med, ønsker hun seg mest av alt fred.

- Det er bare fred som kan få en slutt på de politiske og økonomiske problemene. Men vi trenger også retten til å protestere. Den rettigheten har de tatt fra oss. Taliban styrer med jernhånd, og folket i Kabul skjeller av frykt under deres strenge regime. Men de har klart å få kvinnene til å bli mer oppmerksomme på sine rettigheter enn noen gang før. Kvinner som aldri vil akseptere å leve sine liv i skyggen av samfunnet.

- Vi hører at vestlige kvinner har mange kjærestere, sier han, og vi skjønner på spørsmålene at han tror at alle vestlige kvinner tar med seg kjæresten sin hjem til mannens hus og har sex med dem der. At de drar fra mennene sine, bryter opp familier, har mange kjærlighetsbarn og lar mennene sitte alene når de blir gamle. Det nytter ikke å diskutere med ham.

## RUSSENERNES SKYLD

Tilbake i Kabul snakker vi med viseutenriksministeren, som hevder at det er russerne som er skyld i alle problemene.

Shahika Habib  
livet suadd opp  
hennes tidligere



## INTERNATIONAL

## Iran's war on fundamentalism

TEHRAN

**Iran's president is challenging Islamist militants at home, but there are no easy answers to the conflict with the Afghans next door**

FIRST his own, then Afghanistan's: ever since he became Iran's president a year ago, Muhammad Khatami has had to contend with Islamic extremists. Now, in two unlinked events, he has declared open war on Islamist vigilante groups at home and is half-threatening the Taliban militants across the border. But while he has a fair chance of undermining his domestic fundamentalists, a military intervention in Afghanistan could be disastrous for Iran.

Iranians argue that were they to strike at Afghanistan, as the Americans did, at suspected terrorist camps there last month, they would have a better right than America had to claim self-defence. Ten Iranian diplomats and a journalist were captured by Taliban forces last month; they may still be held hostage or, more probably, they may have been killed. Dozens of other Iranians, mainly truck drivers, are imprisoned in Afghanistan, accused of carrying weapons to the Afghan government forces that Iran supports in their losing battle with the Taliban.

Iran argues that its national security is threatened by the Taliban. The movement, it argues, is serving the interests of America, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia by curtailing the considerable influence that Iran once commanded in Afghanistan. Following this line of reasoning, and ignoring last month's missile strike, Iran's state radio proclaims that "America has practically entered a proxy war with the Afghan people" and is responsible for "all the genocide" taking place there. Above all, Shia Muslim Iranians abhor the "rigid-minded and retrograde" Sunni Muslim Taliban, and fear an ethnic-cleansing campaign against the Shia minority in Afghanistan—which would prompt a new influx of refugees into Iran, to add to the 1.5m already there.

Under pressure to get the diplomats released, the Iranian government has issued thinly veiled threats of military action.

Backing this up, tens of thousands of army and Revolutionary Guard troops have been deployed along the Afghan border in Khorasan province. Mr Khatami has said mildly that he hopes "we will not be forced to resort to non-diplomatic methods." Less mildly, Qods, a newspaper run by a powerful group in Khorasan, has called on the

erful voice in Iran.

On September 4th, the Iranian government gave the Taliban a week to say what has happened to the missing diplomats. But it is not at all clear what it will do when the deadline passes. Iran's fear is that the dispute will continue indefinitely, possibly as an extremely tense stand-off.

The aversion that Iranians feel for the Taliban's interpretation of Islam may have something to do with their experience of Islamist repression at home. One of the most humiliating aspects of life in the Islamic republic has been the intrusion of Islamist vigilantes. Claiming to be guardians of the 1979 Islamic revolution, the vigilantes wage a constant and violent campaign to eradicate all signs of "decadent" western culture. They harass unmarried couples, attack cinemas showing films they deem unislamic and beat up those who disagree with them.

The vigilantes have become even more aggressive this past year, as they try to reverse Mr Khatami's reform programme. They ransack liberal newspapers. They break up street demonstrations. And recently they have been disrupting sermons by liberal-minded clerics. Until now, they have got away with it. The conservative authorities have either looked the other way or cheered them on. Mr Khatami, trying to avoid open conflict with his political opponents, has not dared to do much, except call gently for an end to violence. That has further emboldened the extremists.

Last week, they assaulted two leading moderates, close to Mr Khatami, who were attending Friday prayers at Tehran University. Ayatollah Mohajerani, the culture minister and government spokesman, had his finger hurt; Vice-President Abdollah Nouri was kicked and had his turban knocked off. The president, enraged at last, ordered a crackdown on the vigilantes, saying: "We cannot tolerate the propagation of violence, whoever it comes from. The authorities must not dither or show mercy." Coming out in support of the president, Iran's spiritual leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, ordered the police, who are under his command, to arrest the culprits. By going too far, the vigilantes may have destroyed themselves. The Taliban, in seizing Iran's diplomats, may have also gone too far. But, here, Iran's options are fewer.



**Iran's holy warriors marching as to war**

government to set up a militia of Afghan refugees at the frontier to fight the Taliban.

But Iran is acutely aware that it is not a superpower: it cannot get away with an attack as easily as the Americans did with their missile strike. Various politicians have tried to cool the excitement. "Afghanistan is a quagmire, as the Soviets experienced it," said Kamal Kharrazi, Iran's foreign minister. "We are trying to resolve this problem with prudence, and in a calculated way," added Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, a former president and still a pow-

# Taliban troops claim to have taken key town

By Ahmed Rashid in Lahore

THE ruling Taliban army said yesterday that it had seized a key stronghold, Bamiyan, in central Afghanistan from a northern alliance of opposition forces. However the claim could not be confirmed immediately.

The Taliban and its northern-based enemies are fighting on several fronts. The Taliban army, which has vowed to restore peace in the war-ravaged country and transform Afghanistan into an Islamic state, has made progress in recent weeks.

Meanwhile Iran escalated its feud with the Taliban, saying it would conduct exercises on the Afghan border, with an unprecedented 200,000 troops.

Taliban sources said the Bamiyan valley and town, where more than 300,000 Shia Hazaras had sheltered from the Taliban onslaught, fell to their troops yesterday morning.

The Taliban had been advancing on the town after capturing the northern city

crimes and international bodies should not remain inactive and silent."

Teheran Radio accused the Pakistan air force of assisting the Taliban advance by hitting the town with missiles and cluster bombs.

Pakistan has given substantial military aid to the Taliban, but has always denied direct involvement.

The mainly Shia Hazaras have been backed by Shia-dominated Iran, which said on Saturday that it would be sending more troops to the Afghan border, where 200,000 soldiers will assemble to begin exercises along a 300-mile front on Sept 23.

Seventy thousand Iranian troops are already at the border and carried out a three-day exercise last week.

The Taliban asked the international community to defuse the crisis with Iran, but refused to apologise to Iran for the murder of 10 diplomats in Mazar last month.

The victims' bodies will be flown to Teheran tomorrow, where their burial is likely to cause an emotional public reaction and more pressure on the Iranian government to invade Afghanistan, or at least punish the Taliban.



of Mazar-i-Sharif last month. The Taliban massacred up to 6,000 Hazaras in Mazar, and last night United Nations officials said that they feared the Taliban would perpetrate another massacre in Bamiyan.

Yesterday the Iranian President, Mohammed Khatami, said: "What the Taliban are now committing in Afghanistan are outright war



# Taliban seize 'idolatrous' Buddha icons

FEARS ARE growing for the fate of two giant statues of Buddha in central Afghanistan after the region in which they stand was seized at the weekend by the country's fundamentalist Islamic militia.

The two 200ft-high statues dominate the horizon above the trenches and bunkers being dug in Bamiyan, which the Taliban overran last weekend.

Recognised by archaeologists as one of the greatest construction works of antiquity, the Buddhas of Bamiyan were hewn from rough sandstone about 1,800 years ago.

At least one Taliban commander has pledged to destroy them, saying such representations were idolatrous and offensive to Islam.

He has been overruled by more moderate Taliban officials, but the murder of nine Iranian diplomats by Taliban troops last month shows the Taliban leaders often have difficulty controlling their more extreme elements.

Until the weekend, Bamiyan was held by the opposition Hezb-i-Wahdat faction. With the veteran commander Ahmed Shah Masood's stronghold in the north-east, it was one of the last areas outside the Taliban's control. With its fall on Sunday the opposition forces are in almost total disarray.

The fate of the statues may be affected by the Taliban's need

BY JASON BURKE  
in Islamabad

for international recognition. Many realise that the destruction of the Buddhas would play badly on the global stage.

Presently only three nations – Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates – have recognised the Taliban as the legitimate government of Afghanistan. The country's seat at the United Nations is still held by Burnahuddin Rabbani, the ousted president.

Last year the UN, prompted by leaders of Buddhist countries, called on the Taliban to respect the Bamiyan monuments. They were assured by senior officials in Kandahar – the southern Afghan city that is the headquarters of the Taliban – that the Koran obliged them to respect the holy places of other faiths.

A strong faction within the Taliban, however, believes they are now conducting a *Jihad* (Holy War). "One effect of the recent American missile strikes has been to radicalise the Taliban. They feel that Islam is under threat and that attacks against any target deemed to be non-Islamic is justified," said Kamaal Khan, a Pakistani political analyst.

Iran has deployed 200,000 troops on the western frontier of Afghanistan, ostensibly for military exercises. The Taliban

have reinforced their defences, distributed weapons to local villagers, moved about 25,000 troops to the border and deployed 30 mid-range rockets and 16 Stinger missiles.

The recent crisis, brought to a head by the killing of the Iranian diplomats, has its roots in the complex system of alliances. Iran, dominated by Shia Muslim clerics, has supported the Shia Hezb-i-Wahdat faction against the Sunni Muslim Taliban. The leader of the Hezb-i-Wahdat fled Bamiyan on Sunday to Iran.

Iran is demanding that the Taliban apologise for the murder of the diplomats and send their killers to Iran for trial. So far the Taliban have refused. Neither have the Taliban responded to requests for the release of a further 30 Iranians held prisoner in Kandahar.

There have been reports that retreating Hezb-i-Wahdat fighters massacred dozens of Taliban prisoners in Bamiyan.

Taliban sources claim that an Iranian general is training more than 12,000 Afghan refugees in four camps just inside the border.

Never the less, the Taliban believe that the Iranians are merely sabre-rattling. "They know that to attack would unify the whole of Afghanistan against them and risk war in the whole region," said one senior Taliban.

# Taleban Envoy Waits to Be Heard at UN

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By Barbara Crossette  
New York Times Service

UNITED NATIONS, New York — Someone from the delegation with the sign that says "Afghanistan" made a speech in the General Assembly. But he wasn't a representative of the people who run the country.

Just miles away in his small office in a third-floor walk-up in Queens, New York, the representative of the Taleban, which now controls all but one corner of one province of Afghanistan — and has ruled the capital, Kabul, for two years — was still waiting to be heard.

"The United Nations is using the seat of Afghanistan as a tool of pressure on an Islamic emirate to change its policies and to impose on it a kind of coalition government that will be consequently a secular government," said Abdul Ha-keen Mujahid, the Taleban's most important diplomat. "This is their goal."

It won't work, said Mr. Mujahid, 41, who was born under an Afghan monarchy, fled a Communist takeover and joined one of the more moderate movements that sent holy warriors to fight the Soviet Army before joining the radical Islamic movement and became its ambassador-in-waiting here.

"One of the particularities of Afghan people is that no one can impose their will upon them," he said, in an understatement of several hundred years of history. "The people of Afghanistan are very free people and they are making their de-

cisions by themselves." Other nations will come around, he added, "once they realize that the Taleban Islamic movement, a grassroots movement, arose from the people of Afghanistan."

"Our priority is that we bring peace and security inside Afghanistan," he said, adding that the defeat of the remaining forces of the American-backed *mujahidin* armies was the movement's first priority.

He was reading through his overnight faxes from Kandahar, the Taleban's spiritual capital. Religious scholars there researched the holy books to consider how much of a woman's head must be covered — they did not rule out an uncovered face.

They also examined whether one Islamic nation, in this case Afghanistan, had the right to defend itself against another Islamic nation, Iran, and with the help of non-Islamic outsiders. The answer was an unambiguous yes.

On his second tour in New York — he was the Taleban's ambassador in Pakistan for about six months this year — Mr. Mujahid has brought his family.

His wife, Khatoon, was a village girl, he said, representative of the very conservative society that dominated rural Afghanistan before the Taleban existed, and where the movement finds its deepest support.

They have five children, only one a daughter, Zakira, a 10-year-old. He is searching for an Islamic school for her that is not coeducational. The boys will

go to American public schools, he said.

The Taleban has been unpopular with women's groups, human rights organizations and many governments for its efforts to impose its puritan vision of society on Afghans, and it has been reviled even by the Iranians for giving Islam an out-of-date image, if not a bad name. It has not been able to budge either the General Assembly credentials committee, which decides who holds UN seats, or the powerful governments behind it, most of all the United States.

UN officials are in a bind. They find it hard to work in Afghanistan within the confines of the Taleban's discriminatory rules against women, and agree with much of the criticism of the movement. Yet officials say that they believe that international recognition might change the movement's distrust and hostility toward the outside world.

Afghanistan continues to be represented officially here by the remains of the defeated and largely exiled government of Burhanuddin Rabbani, whose deputy foreign minister, Abdullah Abdullah, spoke Tuesday. Mr. Mujahid called the situation ridiculous.

"To keep the seat of Afghanistan in the hands of the personal representatives of Rabbani is not justice," he said. "It is not fair. It is not according to the rules or the principles of the United Nations."

Mr. Mujahid added: "These realities will be accepted one day, once people realize that these warlords couldn't represent the people of Afghanistan."



## SHROFF

## UNOCAL

## Just Another Crisis

**T**he trouble with oil in Asia is that finding it or selling it often means operating in the most confounded of places. In the nearly three decades that United States-based oil giant Unocal has operated in the region, it has come to recognize the risks. But they have recently come into sharp focus for the world's largest company solely involved in oil-exploration and production.

On August 20, in the wake of the U.S. retaliatory bombings in Afghanistan, Unocal halted indefinitely all work on pipelines it was planning to build through the country to link the oil-rich Caspian Sea to markets in Asia. Although it has committed little money to the projects, Unocal represents international consortiums planning a \$1.9 billion, 1,500-kilometre gas pipeline and a \$2.5 billion, 1,650-kilometre oil pipeline. The halt will postpone the pipelines' completion to well into the next century.

The pipeline delays in Afghanistan came just eight days after U.S.-based Atlantic Richfield Co. announced it was pulling out of Burma. That leaves Unocal in an unenviable position: It is the only major U.S. oil company still operating in that country, where it is helping to develop the Yadana offshore gas field. Activists in the U.S. hailed Atlantic Richfield's move as a victory for their campaign to deter American companies from working in Burma. Despite mounting political pressure to pull out—which analysts expect will grow—Unocal Chairman Roger Beach said on August 20 his company would stay put.

But it's not all doom and gloom. The company announced on August 24 that an oil discovery made the previous week off East Kalimantan in Indonesia was gushing at a test rate of 10,000 barrels a day—a huge strike by any standard, and potentially the country's biggest deep-water find. The area, Chairman Beach said, "will be a key component of Unocal's long-term growth strategy."

The relationship with Indonesia is not entirely smooth, though. The Indonesian government has been late in paying Unocal \$11 million for power deliveries from the company's Salak power plant, about 100

kilometres south of Jakarta. What's more, the company admits in its latest six-month results statement that its foreign-exchange losses in Indonesia and Thailand cut first-half international earnings to \$77 million, down 50% from a year earlier.

Company officials stress the long term, noting that Unocal has survived political and economic difficulties in Asia before, including problems triggered by the 1986 overthrow of the Marcos regime in the Philippines.



Unocal boss Roger Beach: The focus on Asia will be maintained.

"We are working through the problems. Our focus on Asia has not changed," says Barry Lane, the company's spokesman in El Segundo, California.

**S**uch assurances, however, have not comforted credit agencies. In May, Standard & Poor's lowered its overall outlook on the company and its subsidiaries to negative from stable, citing its exposure to Asia's economic crisis. Moody's has assigned a negative outlook to the company's debt for the same reason.

But most analysts believe the company is right to focus on new markets in Asia, despite the political and economic risks. "The credit agencies are totally off," says

Shawn Reynolds, an oil analyst at Lehman Brothers in New York. "Oil is the one sector where in Asia, as elsewhere, governments will ensure the oil flows in order to earn foreign exchange."

Others point to the fact that Unocal, which began operating in Asia in the early 1970s, is arguably the most competitive U.S. exploration company in the region. "Their position is stronger in Asia than anywhere else, despite a few hiccups recently," says Mark Gilman, an oil analyst at ING Baring Furman Selz in New York.

In any case, Unocal long ago nailed its colours to the Asian mast. Four of the six areas worldwide where the company expects to grow are in Asia: Central Asia, offshore Indonesia, South Asia and Thailand-Burma-Vietnam. In 1997, half of its total oil production of 197,000 barrels a day and 43% of its total gas production of 1.9 billion cubic feet a day come from Asia. And those proportions will rise in future, based on current estimates of its oil and gas reserves.

Last year, Unocal President John Imle made Singapore his base. It's also the headquarters for the company's new ventures group for Southeast Asia, which employs more than 5,000 people through wholly and jointly owned projects. Unocal expects to begin natural-gas production from fields in Burma and Bangladesh in December. It already has 11 oil and gas fields in the Gulf of Thailand, where it has operated since 1981, and it's also exploring for oil and gas in Vietnam, Brunei and China. In June, it acquired a 26% interest in India's Hindustan Oil Exploration as part of efforts to expand its exploration activities in that country. It's also active in power-supply projects in China and India.

"They are actually looking at acquiring new assets in Asia since the economic crisis began," notes Gilman. "They look on the region as an area of opportunity."

Wall Street investors remain unenthusiastic, though. Unocal's shares (listed on the New York Stock Exchange) have traded evenly at about \$25 over the last six months, and the market barely reacted to the August 24 announcement of test rates for the new discovery in Indonesia. But Reynolds of Lehman Brothers says the company's decision to invest heavily in Asia isn't likely to change. "The company is large enough to withstand short-term problems like political instability," he says. "In fact it is among the best-positioned to take advantage of new opportunities in Asia." ■ Bruce Gilley

CENTRAL ASIA

# Islamic Face-Off

Fragile nations brace themselves and regional allies realign as Iran inches closer to war with Afghanistan's Taliban

By Ahmed Rashid in London and Islamabad

Not since the break-up of the Soviet Union has Central Asia trodden on such dangerous ground. Iran, with 70,000 troops in place along its border, is poised to invade Afghanistan unless the Taliban—the Islamic revivalist movement that has captured most of that country—turns over 10 diplomats Iran has accused it of kidnapping.

The confrontation pits two branches of Islam—the Sunni Muslim Taliban and Shia Iran—and a complex web of international alliances and ethnic divisions that have formed around the protagonists. The Taliban is backed by Saudi Arabia and Pakistan, and reviled by Russia and the Central Asian states. How the stand-off plays out could have a profound impact across the region.

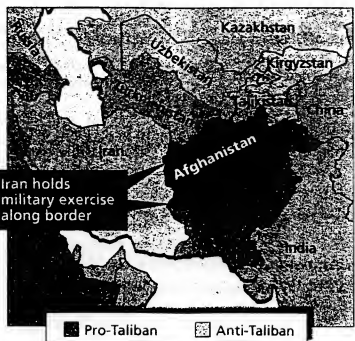
Adding to the instability are the after-shocks of the August 18 American cruise-missile attack on presumed terrorist training camps in Taliban-controlled areas of Afghanistan. Amid fears of reprisals, Western investment in oil and gas projects—crucial to the fragile economies of Central Asia—has begun to dry up. The attacks have also stoked anti-American feeling and Islamic fundamentalism, an increasing threat to the stability of governments in the region.

The U.S. strike has led Pakistan, which like Saudi Arabia is a traditional ally of the U.S., to wonder if the Americans have suddenly switched sides. The targeted camps were believed to be used by Saudi fundamentalist Osama bin Laden, whom the U.S. holds responsible for attacks on

its embassies in Kenya and Tanzania. But the strike marked the first time that U.S. forces have acted against Sunni Islamic fundamentalism, rather than its old enemy, Shia extremism, represented by Iran.

As a result of the strike, America—previously a tacit supporter of the Taliban—is seen as siding with the forces arrayed against the Taliban, including Russia, the Central Asian states, and, ironically, former arch-foe Iran. This has led to an upsurge in domestic fundamentalism and heavy pressure on U.S. allies to take an anti-American stance.

Washington's two strategic partners in the Sunni Muslim world—Pakistan and Saudi Arabia—find themselves isolated in the region and in contradiction with Washington over their support for the Taliban. "The entire region is seeing a major reshuffle of alliances and interests," says a former Pakistani foreign minister. "Everyone will lose by this U.S. action,



Rumour of war: Iranian troops at manoeuvres near the Afghan border.

but Pakistan has lost the most." (See story on page 20.)

Even before the Iranian diplomats went missing on August 9, tension between Iran and Afghanistan was nearing fever pitch. Since July, the Taliban has captured one city after the next in the Iran-backed area of northern Afghanistan. The Taliban's successes appear to have emboldened bin Laden, who stepped up his "war" against the U.S. in August.

Neighbouring countries charge that Pakistan and Saudi Arabia are largely responsible for the Taliban's advance. "The Taliban's military successes are only possible because of the active involvement of Pakistan's army units and air force," Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Boris Pastukhov said on August 13. Western and Asian diplomats allege that the Taliban receives funding and technical help from Pakistan, home to millions of Sunni-Muslim refugees from Afghanistan. Pakistan denies aiding the Taliban.

Within Iran, there have been conflicting indications as to whether an invasion of Afghanistan is imminent. Maj.-Gen. Yahya Rahim Safavi, commander of Iran's Revolutionary



Guards, said on September 3 his country won't tolerate "the open or secret interference of foreign powers in its neighbouring countries." The Taliban reply was equally belligerent. "If Iran attacks, the flames of war will cover Iran and its rulers will suffer from its grave consequences," said a spokesman.

Iran's spiritual guide, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, has played down the possibility of conflict. But, in another bit of irony, the U.S. missile launch has given any invasion by Iran a sort of convenient legitimacy: On September 5, borrowing the argument used by Washington when it launched its missiles, Iran said that under international law and the United Nations' Charter it has the right to take "all necessary action" to defend itself.

If the Iranian diplomats are not found and released, the most likely scenario is that Teheran would arm the thousands of anti-Taliban Afghan fighters who have taken refuge in Iran. This army could then attempt to form an anti-Taliban stronghold along the border by recapturing Herat, a city in western Afghanistan. From there, Iran could try to extend the corridor to Bamiyan—home to Shia Muslims of an ethnic-Afghan minority called Hazara and one of the only important remaining centres of anti-

Taliban resistance in Afghanistan.

Although the Taliban has officially denied the kidnappings, Pakistan claims it is doing its utmost to free Iran's diplomats. Nevertheless, Teheran has accused Islamabad of being insincere and Iran-Pakistan relations have sunk to a new low. UN sources in New York say Iran informed UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan that it suspects Pakistani and Arab extremists fighting alongside the Taliban captured the diplomats and killed them.

Beyond the issue of returning lost diplomats, though, Iran may want retribution for Hazaras killed by the Taliban on August 9 when it captured the northern anti-Taliban stronghold of Mazar-e-Sharif. The area had been held by Uzbek and Shia Hazara forces of the anti-Taliban alliance. According to Amnesty International and UN sources, the Taliban massacred more than 2,000 Hazaras there.

Fearing guerrilla attacks, a flood of asylum-seeking Afghan refugees and internal Islamic insurgency, Central Asian countries have begun to take precautions. The foreign and defence ministers of Kazakhstan, Kirgystan, Uzbekistan and Tajiki-

stan met Russian officials on August 25 to coordinate a joint military and political plan to keep the Taliban from advancing into other territories. All these states still recognize the anti-Taliban alliance as the official government of Afghanistan.

Tajikistan and Uzbekistan have put their armies on maximum alert and closed their borders. Moscow has sent additional troops to Central Asian countries that border Afghanistan. Russia and the Central Asian states have also begun a major joint air exercise to protect their common airspace against possible Taliban air incursions.

In Tajikistan, a fragile UN-brokered peace between the government and the Islamic opposition appears to be breaking down after less than a year. The pact, which ended a five-year civil war, started crumbling after four UN staff were killed in July and the UN peacekeeping mission reduced its presence. Again, neighbours blame Pakistan: The Uzbek and Tajik presidents refused to meet a high-ranking Pakistani envoy sent to appease them, and on August 25 Tajikistan deported four Pakistanis for distributing pro-Taliban literature at mosques in the capital Dushanbe.

Russia has enough to contend with in quelling Islamic fundamentalism in its own heartland. In the Caucasus, the self-declared Chechen Islamic Republic called for strikes against U.S. targets. "Russian policy in the north Caucasus is in crisis because of the Islamic upsurge," says Ali Fatullayev, an adviser to the government of Dagestan, an autonomous republic in the Caucasus where fundamental insurgency is strongest.

Even Turkey, a long-time ally of Pakistan, has for the first time called for action against the Taliban. "The Taliban should be stopped in Afghanistan, otherwise it is likely to cause worrying results in the region," Ahat Anidcan, minister of state for foreign affairs, said at the end of August.

The danger of Islamic insurgency and a potential conflict between Iran and Afghanistan isn't confined to Asia. It could also badly hurt Western companies, which have invested around \$10 billion since 1992 in the development of oil and gas fields and pipeline projects.

After the missile strike, U.S. oil giant Unocal suspended plans to build a controversial gas pipeline that would go from Turkmenistan across Afghanistan to Pakistan. It also pulled staff from Islamabad.

Unocal's pullout virtually ends U.S. attempts to export Central Asian energy eastwards through pipelines that avoid Iran. It also kills the only leverage that Washington had over the Taliban. It seems like an abrupt about-

## On Other Pages

### 20 Fundamental Pakistan

face: Just nine months ago, the U.S. sympathized with the Taliban because of its anti-Iran stance; it acquiesced in Pakistani and Saudi support for the Taliban, even though it knew that bin Laden was well ensconced with them, and it gave full backing to the Unocal pipeline project.

Aside from the terrorist threat, a dramatic slump in oil demand in the Far East and low global oil prices have also damaged Central Asian pipeline projects,

exactng a crippling effect on Central Asia's already weak economies. Virtually bankrupt, Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan, in particular, are desperate for new pipelines to export their energy.

As it stands, though, the future role of U.S. oil companies in Central Asia and

U.S. attempts to help stabilize Central Asian economies could be in jeopardy. "U.S. foreign policy in the region appears directionless and confused," comments a European diplomat in Islamabad.

Exactly what direction the U.S. relationship will take with Pakistan and Saudi Arabia is still unclear. But anti-American sentiment is growing in both those countries.

## Fundamental Pakistan

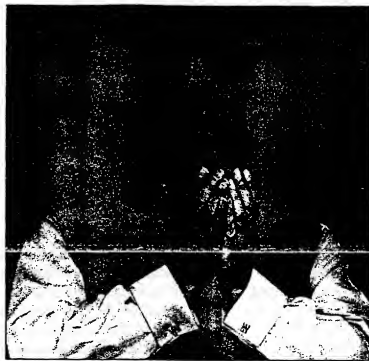
By Ahmed Rashid in Lahore with Shiraz Sidhva in New Delhi

**T**he 73 cruise missiles unleashed by U.S. warships against presumed terrorist training camps in Afghanistan did more than destroy their targets. They triggered an Islamic fundamentalist backlash that threatens Pakistan's crisis-hit government and makes it difficult politically for Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif to accept demands on nuclear weapons-control made by his country's traditional ally, the United States.

In fact, at the end of August, Pakistan's prime minister dropped a cruise missile of his own: He introduced an Islamic bill in parliament, which if passed will give sweeping powers to the government "to proscribe what is right and forbid what is wrong," according to its own interpretation of the Koran. Superior-court judgments could be disregarded by an executive order, civil rights and press freedom could be curbed and secular political parties that are considered anti-Islamic could be banned.

Most observers and Pakistanis alike see this as a desperate attempt by the prime minister to ensure his own survival by concentrating power in the government's hands. The result, say critics, will only be the speedier meltdown of a country already teetering on the brink of bankruptcy and bitterly divided along the fault lines of ethnicity and Islamic versus secular values.

Opposition politicians and the media fear traditional Islamic rule could even lead to a civil war. "Sharif is calling for the break-up of the country and the end of the constitution," says Ajmal Khattak, a leader of the Awami National Party, an ally of Sharif until August. "This is blasphemy and depicts Sharif's Taliban-



Premier Nawaz Sharif: deeper and deeper in trouble.

like mentality by passing medieval judgments," opposition leader Benazir Bhutto told reporters.

Even Sharif's cabinet and ruling Pakistan Muslim League have problems with the bill. In recent weeks, Sharif, whose support base is largely from the majority province of Punjab, has antagonized small ethnic groups and religious minorities in three other provinces. Four provincial political parties that were allied to the League in Sindh, Baluchistan and the North West Frontier Province have deserted the government and joined the opposition—endangering the League's parliamentary and political support in all three provinces.

The most serious situation is in Sindh, where the desertion of the Muhajir Qaumi Movement has left the League with just 15 seats in the 109-seat Sindh assembly. Ethnic and sectarian warfare in Sindh has killed over 600 people this year alone—110 of those in August.

For their part, businessmen and bankers have expressed fear that the bill will drive away foreign investment and make it more difficult for the country to obtain an International Monetary Fund bailout it desperately needs. Even before the bill, the government's inability to tackle the economic problems brought on by Pakistan's May nuclear tests and escalating ethnic and sectarian violence in the streets had eroded public confidence. "The Islamic bill is the last straw on the

camel's back," says an official of an international lending agency in Islamabad.

Meanwhile, the economic crisis has worsened. Islamabad has only \$750 million in foreign-exchange reserves, but must find at least that much by September 30 to meet interest payments on its \$36 billion in sovereign foreign debt.

Pakistan has already defaulted on short-term foreign-currency bank loans, the repatriation of profits by foreign companies and foreign-exchange bills for government utilities, notes one analyst in Karachi.

There is also a massive flight of capital. The Pakistani rupee has lost more than 40% since May. Also during that time, the Karachi stock exchange has slid 28% and property prices have crashed. The first figures for the financial year that began on July 1 present a dismal picture. Exports and imports fell 13% and 23% respectively in July from the previous year. Inflation is running at over 20%, compared with a government target of 8%.

An IMF team is due to arrive in Pakistan on September 11, but Fund officials in Washington say the government will have to agree to some tough conditions before any deal is struck. Facing a \$4.5 billion budgetary shortfall this year, the country is expected to ask for a \$4 billion-6 billion bailout and to request that its foreign debt be rescheduled.

All this is rather worrisome to Pakistan's neighbours—none more so than India. "Naturally, the Indian side is concerned that violence and terrorism will be exported to our country in the name of religion if Pakistan disintegrates to an anarchy," says a senior Indian Foreign Ministry official. "The idea that nuclear weapons could fall into the hands of fanatics is quite disturbing for us and the rest of the world."



# The Pakistani Connection

By Rizwan Qureshi

*To cover up the large number of Pakistani casualties inside what the US and its allies described as "terrorist training facilities," the local authorities created an atmosphere of utmost secrecy on this side of the border...*

"There was a whistling sound overhead, followed by deafening blasts, and then the roof came crashing down," recalls Mohammad Furqan Bhatti, a 20-year-old Jamiatul Mujahideen activist from Multan. On the night of August 20, Bhatti was standing guard outside what he calls the Maskar Al-Masoom, a base at the Al-Farooq training camp in the Zhavar area of Afghanistan. "At about 10.30 p.m. I went into the barracks," he says. "That was when the missiles hit the camp. They lit up the sky so brightly that for a moment I thought the sun had suddenly risen."

As US Cruise missiles rained down on the camp, a chunk of

flying mortar struck Bhatti in the neck, knocking him unconscious. At around midnight, he and seven other wounded activists were taken across the border to Miramshah in Pakistan. His companions were immediately shifted to hospitals in Peshawar and Rawalpindi, but Bhatti was still at the local hospital when this correspondent visited Miramshah on the afternoon of August 21. He had wounds all over his body but no fractures, possibly the reason why doctors had decided not to send him to a bigger hospital.

"There was a big rush at the hospital this morning [August 21]," says Mohammad Mujtaba, a local journalist in Miramshah, headquarters of the North Waziristan Agency. "I saw eight wounded men, one of whom

of their camp kitchen, hitting the Baloch."

Most of the wounded were Harkatul Mujahideen militants from the Amir Muawiya camp, located close to the Al-Farooq camp in the Zhavar hills. Besides, at least six dead bodies had been recovered from the debris of Amir Muawiya on the night of the attack, which were brought to Miramshah "and quickly dispatched to their family homes in the Punjab," an intelligence source in Miramshah discloses. According to him, the dead Harkat activists hailed from Multan, Faisalabad, Bahawalnagar and Mansehra.

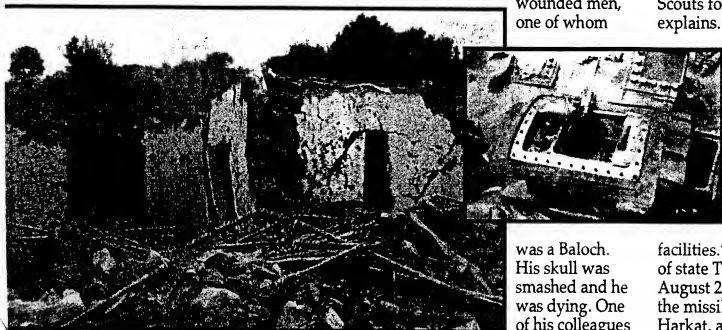
The emergency at the hospital was "handled entirely by army doctors called in from the Tochi Scouts fort at Miramshah," Mujtaba explains. "The civilian staff of the

hospital, including doctors, were kept at bay."

This atmosphere of secrecy was obviously created to cover up the large number of Pakistani casualties inside what the Americans and their allies have described as "terrorist training

facilities." As US deputy secretary of state Thomas Pickering put it on August 21, "the Pakistanis killed in the missile attack were [from the] Harkat, a terrorist organisation engaged in sending terrorists inside Kashmir."

In an attempt to block the flow of



**Dust to dust: the Al-Badr camp in Khost destroyed during the August 20 attack; (inset) the remains of a Tomahawk Cruise missile**

was a Baloch. His skull was smashed and he was dying. One of his colleagues told me that a missile crashed through the roof

information, both the Tochi Scouts and Taliban officials closed the border at the two crossing points of Ghulam Khan and Saidgai near Miramshah on the morning of August 21. "We have orders not to let anyone cross [over to the Afghan side]," said Umer Farooq, a Tochi Scouts havaladar guarding Pakistan's last border post near the hill village of Saidgai. "We even stopped Jalaluddin Haqqani from approaching the camps this morning."

Haqqani, who is minister for border affairs in the Taliban government, was at his Miramshah residence on the night of the attack. When approached by the *Herald* for his assessment of the damage, he said he did not have first-hand information because he was prevented from reaching the camps by Pakistani border guards. When asked why he, a minister in the Taliban government, was not allowed access to an area where his presence was sorely needed at that crucial hour, he responded that the junior officials (of the Tochi Scouts) posted at the border did not know him. "Their telecommunications equipment was out of order at the time, so I could not contact the political agent."

However, the havaladar at Saidgai does not corroborate Haqqani's version of events. He denies that his wireless radio set was out of order, and also says that he knows Haqqani well. "We respect him very much," he maintains. "He came here [on the night of the attack] and spent some time with us before dawn, but had to return because we had strict orders not to let anyone pass."

Barely one kilometre ahead of the Saidgai checkpoint is the hill where the two Pakistani-run camps, Amir Muawiya and Al-Farooq, are situated. Local people call the place Punjabianno Ghund, or the Punjabis' base. We can see a white tent on top of the hill, which the Tochi Scouts officials say is the camp's outpost, but we cannot see the camps hit by the missiles because they are located on the far side of the hill.

Havaladar Umar Farooq, who was on duty at Saidgai when the attack took place, says that four blasts followed each other at intervals of one minute each, illuminating the



**Taliban minister for border affairs, Jalaluddin Haqqani: duty bound?**

entire valley each time they struck. "We ducked and ran into our bunkers," Farooq recalls. "When the blasts stopped, I contacted Miramshah on the radio and told them what had happened. They did not pass any immediate instructions to me."

But it seems that enough instructions had been issued before dawn the next day. Haqqani's failure to reach Punjabianno Ghund was just one of a sequence of curious events on the Pakistani side of the border preceding and following the attack. For some unexplained reason, the communications link between Miramshah and the rest of the country remained suspended from the time of the attack until well past noon the next day. Telephones in Kandahar, which are mostly linked to local exchanges in Quetta, also failed to answer calls during this period. Meanwhile, Miramshah was swarming with plainclothes men of all descriptions, stopping strangers and pestering them with persistent questions. We were followed and harassed by them in Miramshah on several occasions. A couple of senior spies even got inside the room where we waited for an interview with Jalaluddin Haqqani, and one of them slipped into Haqqani's chamber with us and was present throughout the interview. Haqqani himself appeared powerless in shoeing away the menace, just as he was unable to cross the border into

his own country.

With Pakistan and Taliban officials remaining tight-lipped about the incident, and the Americans choosing not to disclose operational details of the attack, forming a clearer picture about the entire episode becomes an exercise in piecing together bits of information obtained either from eyewitness accounts or provided to journalists by unnamed officials in Washington and Islamabad. Judging from this information, it appears that four ships and a submarine of the US Fifth Fleet launched

between 50 and 70 Tomahawk (Block-III version) Cruise missiles from 200 nautical miles off the Pakistani shore in the Arabian Sea. The missiles were aimed at six camp sites in the Khost region, 150 kilometers south of Kabul. They apparently hit their targets with 80 per cent accuracy, killing anywhere between 36 to 80 people, including at least 15 Arabs.

Described by US officials as the "largest and most extensive Sunni Muslim terrorist university in the world," all six camps are located in a desolate mountainous region close to the Pakistan border. In fact, the two camps at Punjabianno Ghund are barely seven or eight kilometres north-west of Miramshah, as the crow flies.

One of these camps, Amir Muawiya, was originally called the Salman Farsi camp and was set up in the early 1980s by Gulbuddin Hekmatyar's Hizb-i-Islami with the support of Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) and the US Central Investigation Agency (CIA). After the withdrawal of the Red Army from Afghanistan in 1989, the facility was placed at the disposal of the Jamaat-i-Islami-backed Hizbul Mujahideen, a guerrilla outfit that was active in Kashmir until the mid-1990s. With the emergence of the Taliban, the Hizb activists were expelled from the camp and the facility was handed over to the pro-Taliban Harkatul Ansar, another Sunni militant organisation

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**Close call: Jamiatul Mujahideen activist Furqan Bhatti at the Miramshah district hospital**

operating in Kashmir. The US declared Harkat to be a terrorist organisation when its activists allegedly kidnapped and killed four western tourists in Kashmir in December 1994. Subsequently, the Harkatul Ansar rechristened itself as the Harkatul Mujahideen and renamed the camp Amir Muawiya. The group is led by Maulana Fazlur Rahman Khalil, a militant religious scholar from Dera Ismail Khan, and overall charge of the camp is held by Maulvi Jabbar in Afghanistan.

Al-Farooq, the second camp at Punjabiano Ghund, was originally part of the erstwhile Salman Farsi camp. But it became a separate entity when a group from within the Harkatul Mujahideen, led by the Muzaffarabad-based Mufti Bashir, broke away and organised itself as the Jamiatul Mujahideen.

Some four kilometres away from Punjabiano Ghund, the Harkatul Mujahideen run a second training facility, the Khalid bin Walid camp. Located some 16 kilometres to the west are two Arab camps, Al-Badr I and Al-Badr II. The sixth camp, over 30 kilometres west of Punjabiano Ghund, is run by another Harkat dissident, Qari Saiful Islam Akhtar, who now heads the Harkat Jihad-i-Islami which operates in Afghanistan as well as Kashmir.

Most of these camps were built by

recruits were at the Khalid bin Walid camp on the night of the attack. The other facilities are known to house between 200 and 300 trainees at any given time. But the Taliban authorities, who alone have access to these facilities at the moment, are underplaying the extent of the damage caused by the attack, saying most trainees were out on war duties in northern Afghanistan when the missiles struck their camps.

**Religious leaders in Pakistan claim the camps were nothing more than religious schools, but those who have been there say the facilities were geared towards guerrilla training on a massive scale.**

While religious leaders in Pakistan claim the camps were nothing more than religious schools teaching *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence), those who have seen the camps say they were geared towards guerrilla warfare training on a massive scale. "They have a vigorous training schedule," says Mira Jan (not his real name), a Dawar tribesman in Miramshah who spent several years on the battlefield during the anti-Soviet 'jihad' era. "Morning prayers are followed by cross-country runs until 10 a.m. and then there is an academic session until lunch. The entire afternoon is devoted to training in the use of heavy arms, such as rocket-launchers and anti-aircraft guns, and heavy artillery weapons including mortars and anti-tank guns. The boys rest only at night."

the ISI and the CIA by blasting out caves in the hills where arms and ammunition could be stockpiled in safety. These facilities are surrounded by light structures built in stone and clay which serve as barracks, and the trainees invariably put up canvas tents on high ground in the summer. The Harkatul Mujahideen claims

that up to 1,200

Furqan Bhatti, who was injured at the Maskar Al-Masoom base, confirms Mira Jan's statement. "The training is tough and the boys are on their feet all of their waking hours," he says. Bhatti was not a trainee at the Al-Farooq camp. As he explains, he was recruited by the Lashkar-e-Taiba from Multan a couple of months ago and sent for a 21-day preliminary course at the Abdullah bin Masood camp, located near the Chalabandi bridge in the Sirikot area of Muzaffarabad. There the boys were imparted light weapons training by the camp Amir, Nasr Javed Bhai of Khanewal.

Upon completion of his preliminary training, Bhatti was assigned *khidmat* (service) duty, first at the Lashkar's Multan office and then at the Zhavar base of the Jamiatul Mujahideen, where Lashkar recruits are sent for training. These assignments, he says, were part of the mandatory three-month *khidmat* duty which would automatically qualify him to participate in a three-month commando training programme. After completing commando training, the more intelligent recruits are selected for a six-month course in what Bhatti calls "intelligence" training.

A junior recruit himself, Bhatti says he does not know what this last category of training entails. But an explanation is not long in coming from another source. "It encompasses intelligence gathering and planning urban warfare," confides a senior Harkatul Mujahideen guerrilla currently "resting" in Peshawar. He refuses to identify the men who impart intelligence training to militants, saying he has not come all the way from Srinagar (his hometown) to Peshawar to disclose all his secrets.

But the American strikes have spilled the beans. When a Tajik and three Arab volunteers were injured during a grenade and mine-laying training session at one such camp in December 1997, the security agencies in Peshawar laid a virtual siege of the hospital where they were being treated, the aim being to prevent journalists from approaching them. This time round, however, the bang has been too loud and the damage too extensive to cover up. ■

# Exporting Jihad?

Although the Taliban vociferously deny that the Khost camps were centres of terrorist training, the evidence indicates otherwise.

**A**l-Badr, named thus by deposed Afghan Prime Minister Gulbaddin Hekmatyar's Hezb-i-Islamia and its Pakistani ally, the Jamaat-i-Islami, is a complex in the Gurbaz district of Khost province in southern Afghanistan comprising six camps. Hundreds of Afghans, Pakistanis and Muslim militants from several other countries have spent time at these camps and received military training there. Some of those under training, such as Abu Talha from Cheechawatni in Punjab, chalked their names on the roadside rocks. Graffiti in Urdu and Arabic, such as 'Jamaat-i-Islami Zindabad,' 'Shaheen Shahend Group,' and 'Victory is at hand,' is visible all over the place.

The remotely located camps are situated in the lap of mountains on the border between Pakistan's North Waziristan Agency and Afghanistan. Two jeepable roads provide access to them. They are guarded by a mountain-top command post and a few checkpoints on the road manned by armed guards, and are barricaded by barbed wire fences.

The two camps in the Al-Badr complex going by the names Al-Badr 1 and Al-Badr 11 were raided and shut

down by the Taliban Islamic movement about two years ago on the plea that the Hezb-i-Islami (Hekmatyar) was using them for anti-Taliban activities in Khost.

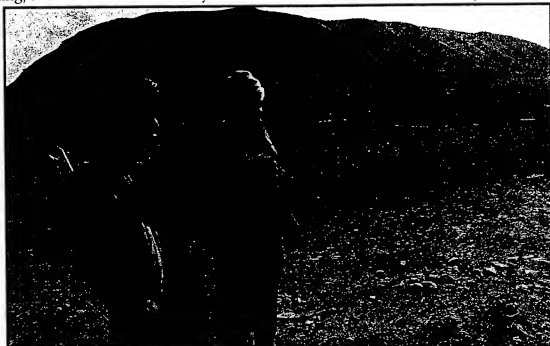
Relations between the Taliban and Hezb-i-Islami were never cordial. In fact, the two had fought for control of several provinces in Afghanistan before confronting each other in Khost. It was only a matter of time before the Al-Badr camps were cleared of Hezb-i-Islami men by the Taliban because the latter

that his government had credible reports that the camps had become centres of anti-Taliban planning and activities. He felt the Hezb-i-Islami was contemplating revenge on the Taliban because it had suffered the most at their hands. "Qazi Hussain Ahmad's Jamaat-i-Islami is very close to the Hezb-i-Islami and the two were jointly running these camps. We took over the camps and asked the 107 Pakistanis living there to return to their homeland. They were very honourably allowed to

enter Pakistan at the Pak-Afghan border near the camps," he explained.

What Syed Abdullah didn't explain was the fact that the camps were handed over to the Harkatul Ansar, a militant Islamic group that is sending volunteers to fight in Afghanistan, Indian-occupied Jammu and Kashmir and certain other trouble spots in the world. The Harkatul Ansar was

renamed Harkatul Mujahideen when it was declared a terrorist outfit by the US government. In the past, the Harkatul Ansar was very close to the Jamiatul Ulema-i-Islami (JUI) Pakistan, especially to its faction led by Maulana Fazlur Rehman. There are still strong links between the two, but the Harkatul Mujahideen has now become more radical and seems to have established international links to pursue its agenda.



▲ Taliban soldiers stand guard outside the Al-Badr II camp in Khost.

feared that Hekmatyar's supporters would always be looking for opportunities to avenge their humiliating military defeats by them.

After capturing Khost and the adjoining provinces of Paktia and Paktika, the Taliban spent some time consolidating their positions before striking at the Hezb-i-Islami-run camps. On that occasion, Syed Abdullah, the Taliban Governor of Khost, maintained

Coincidentally, the Harkatul Mujahideen leader is also named Fazlur Rehman (Khalil) and like the JUI leader, belongs to Dera Ismail Khan in the NWFP.

It was probably due to the Harkatul Mujahideen and the JUI's friendly terms with the Taliban that the camps were handed over to the former after being seized from the Hezb-i-Islami and the Jamaat-i-Islami. The Hezb-i-Islami's pointsman for running the camps and establishing links with like-minded groups and individuals from other countries was its well-known commander, Khalid Farooqi, while those from Taliban ranks assisting in this task included former military commanders Mullah Wahidyar and Mansoor and Jalaluddin Haqqani. The latter has been running a huge camp called 'Salman Farsi Ghund' in Khost for years where he trains and equips

Afghan fighters and also volunteers from other Islamic countries. In a recent interview in Khost, Haqqani said he initially established the camps to house the first mujahideen radio station in Afghanistan. In due course of time, he said a madrassah workshop was built, specifically for the repair of arms since it was not always possible to transport weapons to Pakistan for repair. Later, a clinic and ammunition dumps were also



▲ The day after: The Jowar training camp post US missile attack.

established at the camps. He denied that his camps were ever used for military or terrorist training and disputed American claims of having

## Afghanistan's Nation of Islam

**Afghanistan has become a vast training camp for militant groups from across the Muslim world engaged in assorted jihads.**

Militant and extremist Muslim groups from the Arab states, Pakistan and Azad Kashmir fighting against what they believe, are the 'westernised' regimes in their respective countries, and the Indian occupation of Kashmir, have found not just sanctuary in war-ravaged Afghanistan, but moral and material help as well.

The presence of Arab and Pakistani nationals affiliated with different religious-political parties and organisations on Afghan soil dates back to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979. They were joined by Kashmiri freedom fighters in the late 1980s.

At the inception of the Afghan war, Arabs hailing from Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Algeria, Yemen and other Muslim states, most of whom were members or sympathisers of the Egyptian-based, Muslim Brotherhood (Akhwan-ul-Muslamdeen), arrived in Afghanistan to fight the Soviets alongside the mujahideen led by former Afghan Prime Minister and chief of the Hezb-i-Islami, Afghanistan, Gulbuddin Hikmatyar. A sizeable number of these Arabs, many of whom later joined ranks with other mujahideen

factions, such as those led by the deposed Afghan president Burhanuddin Rabbani, Professor Abdul Rab Rasul Sayyaf and the chief of the Jamaat-ud-Dawa, late Maulvi Jamil-ur-Rehman, have now rallied under the banner of Osama bin Laden.

The most wanted man in the United States today, the Saudi dissident Osama bin Laden, was among the early batches of Arab volunteers who arrived in Afghanistan to fight against the "Godless infidels." He proudly displays his Ak-47 (Kalashnikov) assault rifle which he seized from a dead Russian general while fighting in eastern Afghanistan. Bin Laden returned to Saudi Arabia after the withdrawal of Soviet forces in 1988. Stripped off his nationality by the Saudi authorities in 1994 for conspiring to overthrow the king and plan guerrilla warfare against the presence of American troops in the holy land, the multi-millionaire civil engineer then migrated to Sudan. In May, 1996, Osama was expelled from Sudan under pressure from the United States and other western countries and had to move to the eastern Afghan city of Jalalabad, where he camped along with other volunteers of Arab radical group in the Tora Boora area of Nangarhar. With his arrival, the small Arab groups that had fled to Afghanistan after Pakistani authorities launched a crackdown against them to dislodge them from Peshawar and the tribal areas in 1993, found a rallying point.

Bin Laden heads the Al-Qaida organisation, the supreme body of different militant outfits active in Arab states which is aimed at creating coordination among them. He recently announced the formation of an International Islamic Front with the aim to expel Americans from Saudi Arabia stationed there since the Gulf war, and to fight against Israel. The





dealt a fatal blow to the infrastructure in the area. "Two Red Army air and ground attacks, artillery shelling and scores of air raids failed to destroy the Zhavara camps. What can 60 or 70 long-range Tomahawk cruise missiles

do to a place as fortified as Zhavara?" he asked.

The camps in Khost attracted much attention when deposed Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto and her interior minister Maj. Gen. (Retd) Naseerullah Babar publicly alleged that they were used to impart military training to a number of Pakistanis who later indulged in terrorist activities. Both asked that the camps be closed down as they were posing a security threat to Pakistan.

Ms Bhutto had also complained about the activities of Arab volunteers who came to Pakistan during the Afghan 'jihad' and later stayed on, prompting governments in Egypt, Algeria and Saudi Arabia to complain to Islamabad that these militants were using Pakistan's soil to mount terrorist attacks in their countries. In 1996, Babar also provided information about

the arrest of two batches of 33 and 107 Pakistanis, mostly from the Punjab and Sindh, on the Pak-Afghan border who had received military training in the Khost camps. He didn't provide details on that occasion about the political affiliation of the arrested Pakistanis, but it was obvious that they were mostly Jamaat-i-Islami members. Government officials also hinted that some of them could be MQM activists seeking military training in different guises. The arrested men were nabbed when they tried to cross over to Pakistan, booked under the notorious Frontier Crimes Regulations (FCR) by the political administration of the North Waziristan agency, and sent to the central prison in Dera Ismail Khan. All of them were freed after interrogation.

Al-Badr 1 and 11 were not the only military training camps in Khost. There were others, such as the Abu Jindal, Al-

Egypt-based Jamiat-ul-Jehad led by Aiman Al-Zawahiri is yet another radical group currently camped in Afghanistan. Zawahiri is Bin Laden's close confidante, right hand man and his spokesperson to the press, which he intermittently addresses through his satellite phone from his hideout in Afghanistan.

Omar Abdur Rehman and Assim Abdur Rehman, the two sons of Sheikh Omar Abdur Rehman, the blind Egyptian cleric who was jailed in connection with the bombing of the World Trade Centre in the United States, are also with Bin Laden. Others enjoying Taliban hospitality include Algerians affiliated with the Islamic Salvation Front, popularly known as the FIS, members of the Ittehad-i-Islami of Somalia, and Muslims from the Philippine Abu-Sayyaf organisation.

Among the Pakistani and Kashmiri groups receiving training in Afghanistan to fight Indian troops in held Kashmir, are volunteers from the Harkat-ul-Mujahideen, an organisation which was carved-out of the Harkat-ul-Ansar, a militant outfit declared a terrorist organisation by the United States. Harkat-ul-Ansar took over charge of the Salman Farsi training camp in the Jawar area after volunteers of the Hezbul-Mujahideen, a military wing of the Jamaat-i-Islami, Pakistan, were evicted from Khost by the Taliban in 1996. The camps was then rechristened the Amir Muawiyya camp. The Harkat-ul-Mujahideen is led by Fazl-ur-Rehman Khalil of the Dera Ismail Khan district of the NWFP, and is apparently an independent organisation. Similar to this organisation is the Jamiat-ul-Mujahideen headed by Mufti Bashir, a splinter group of the Harkat-ul-Ansar based in Muzaffarabad, Azad Kashmir. Despite differences between them, both these groups shared the training facilities available at the Amir Muawiyya camp. Another group that operates in the same

area is the Harkat-ul-Jehad Islami, whose chief, Qari Saiful Islam Akhtar was originally an activist of the Harkat-ul-Ansar but later parted ways with the organisation and formed his own group. Fighters affiliated with Akhtar's organisation have taken part in combat against Afghan opposition forces near Kabul. Interestingly, Qari Saiful Islam Akhtar is alleged to be one of the key characters in the conspiracy to overthrow the Benazir Bhutto government in 1995, and assassinate the top brass of the armed forces with an aim to bringing about an Islamic revolution in Pakistan. The two army officials involved in this coup attempt, Brigadier Mustansar Billah and Major Zaheer-ul-Islam Abbasi, were court martialed, but the chief of the Harkat-ul-Jehad Islami managed to escape justice by fleeing to Afghanistan.

A sizeable number of activists from the two factions of the Jamiat-e-Ulema-e-Islami led by Maulana Fazlur Rehman and Maulana Sami-ul-Haq respectively, have since 1994 also joined Taliban ranks. Reports also suggest that hundreds of volunteers of the Tehrik-e-Nifaz-e-Shariat-e-Muhammadi (TNSM) from the Malakand division have been sent to Afghanistan to strengthen Taliban ranks and receive military training. The participation of Jamaat-i-Islami workers in the Afghan jihad, especially activists of its students wing, the Islami Jamiat-e-Taliba, is no secret. A number of them were killed in the battle between Gulbuddin Hikmatyar and Burhanuddin Rabbani for the control of Kabul.

This pan Islamic band of holy crusaders has not restricted its activities to Afghanistan and Kashmir. Volunteers from assorted Arab groups, Pakistanis and Kashmiris are reportedly also fighting alongside the Muslims in Chechnya, Bosnia and recently Kosovo. ■

— Behroz Khan

Farooq, Salman Farsi and Khalid Bin Waleed camps. Abu Jindal subsequently came to be known as the Arab camp, and it was here that Saudi dissident, Osama Bin Laden, held his famous press conference in May this year in which he announced the launching of his International Islamic Front for Jihad Against America and Israel. Volunteers from almost every Arab country were to be found there, though the majority belonged to Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Algeria. The more famous among them were Dr. Ayman Al-Zawahiri, head of the Islamic Jihad in Egypt, Shaikh Taseer Abdullah who is a right-hand man of Bin Laden, the two young sons of the blind Egyptian preacher and Gama'at-i-Islami leader, Shaikh Omar Abdur Rahman, who was convicted for planning the bombings in New York and is now imprisoned in an American jail, and Shawki Islambouli, the younger brother of an Egyptian army officer, Khalid Islambouli, who shot dead President Anwar Sadaat during a military parade in Cairo.

In his interview on that occasion, Khost governor Syed Abdullah refuted the Hezb-i-Islami and Jamaat-i-Islami contention that the seizure of the Al-Badr camps by the Taliban and the eviction of Pakistanis and Afghans was an un-Islamic and anti-jihad act. "The Taliban aren't opposed to a genuine jihad. In fact, our movement itself is a jihad against sin, corruption and cruelty in which the mujahideen indulged after the installation of an Islamic movement in Afghanistan in 1992," he argued. He added that the Taliban would never allow their area to be used for activities against Pakistan because the Pakistan government and people had supported the Afghans in their hour of trial during the Soviet occupation of their country.

However, Abdullah's contention was disputed by the PPP government (1993-96) which repeatedly pointed accusing fingers at the Khost camps as a centre from which religious fanatics were unleashed to strike in Pakistan. The Harkatul Mujahideen, because of its Sunni base, also became a platform for anti-Shia elements, one sign of

which was the subsequent naming of one of the Khost camps the 'Amir Muawiyya' camp. There were also reports that Sunni extremists wanted in Pakistan took refuge in these camps and lured others to follow in their footsteps.

The Harkatul Mujahideen has been recruiting young men from all the



▲ Commander Jal-ud-din Haqqani, Taliban minister of frontiers and tribes flanked by the shells recovered from the US missiles.

provinces of Pakistan and from both sides of the Line of Control in Kashmir. A sizeable number of its recruits are students of religion from madrassahs. In fact, they are the Pakistani version of the Afghan Taliban and some are actively involved in the ongoing fighting in Afghanistan. Others have sacrificed their lives fighting in Indian-occupied Kashmir. Along with the Lushkar-i-Tayyaba, the Harkatul Mujahideen is one of the two major Pakistani suppliers of manpower for the battle in Jammu and Kashmir.

The Khost camps have attracted so many young men from the Punjab province that it has come to be known as the Punjabi Ghund (camp) – even though men from the NWFP, Sindh and Kashmir as well as Arabs live there. The inmates comprise teenagers as well as grey-haired men. Some of the

permanent residents of the camps, like Mohammad Yaqub alias Abu Huraira of the Harkatul Mujahideen, commanded respect from all and sundry. Abu Huraira, who was often referred to as an 'ustad' by the younger Harkat boys, was one of the nine members of the Harkatul Mujahideen killed in the August 20 US airstrike against the Khost

**The Harkatul Mujahideen has been recruiting young men from Pakistan and from both sides of the Line of Control in Kashmir. Some are actively involved in the ongoing fighting in Afghanistan and Indian-occupied Kashmir.**

camps.

Syed Abdullah, who is still the governor of Khost, claimed after the American cruise missile attack that the camps had largely survived the airstrike. Haqqani and other former mujahideen commanders like Shah Khan Gurbaz, who has been named head of a garrison now being set up at the Arab or Abu Jindal camp, also disputed Washington's claims that the camps have been made inoperational. Nonetheless, the Taliban leaders refused journalists access to the camps for about two weeks, arousing suspicion about whether they were indeed intact or being rehabilitated. However, the Taliban recently allowed journalists to visit the camps and Syed Abdullah has announced plans to set up a madrassah in the Salman Farsi camp and a garrison in the Arab one. Will these proposed changes satisfy President Bill Clinton who, after the airstrike on Afghanistan, called the Khost camps 'the world's largest facility for terrorist training,' or should one expect more American and western attacks on this infrastructure? ■

# Remains of the Day

The mood in the missile-hit camps in Khost is not one of despair – but of anger and revenge.

Radical Muslim groups, which were attacked by the United States in eastern Afghanistan, now await a go-ahead signal from the Taliban leadership to either resume activities in Khost or relocate their training camps elsewhere in the country.

"We can rebuild the damaged portions of the mud houses and the camps will be fully operational within a week's time. The American air strikes cannot deter us from our goal. It is up to the Taliban and the mujahideen high command to decide whether to stay in Jawar or relocate the camps," says Kashmiri guerrilla leader, Bakht Zamin, at a Mansehra base. The commander, affiliated with the Hezb-ul-Mujahideen, was in one of the training camps in Khost when American Tomahawk cruise missiles rained down on them on the night of

August 20, leaving over two dozen people dead. The majority of the people who died were either Pakistani or Kashmiri nationals while seven Arab nationals also perished in the attack.

Being hand-in-glove with the extremist Islamic groups and supporting their cause in the Muslim states, it is believed that the Taliban will opt for relocating the camps rather than expelling these militant outfits. "Our operations have not been disrupted by

the air strikes. Thousands of mujahideen have already been trained and our cadre is intact. The killing of 22 persons cannot affect our task," says the Harkat commander, who hopes to return to Afghanistan in the near future to resume his training activities.

All the six training camps in Khost were hit by dozens of missiles fired by the US in pursuit of the Saudi multi-millionaire Osama bin Laden, who took

terrorist in the world. It has let loose a reign of terror on Muslims all over the world. Can America prove the involvement of Osama bin Laden or those killed in the air strikes in the bombing of embassies in Dar-es-Salam and Tanzania," asks Dr. Ahmad Sarwar, a Pakistani national who was also in the Amir Muawiyya training camp on the night of August 20. "I heard a whistle-like sound, followed by a fireball. And

within seconds the missile hit the ground some 15 yards to my right. There was a deafening explosion and six to seven others in succession," recalls Dr. Sarwar, who accompanied the three injured persons who were shifted to the Hayatabad Medical Complex Peshawar from Khost. "It is our turn now. We will reply to the US attack. The superpower attacked our religious schools in Khost in the night, like cowards, but we will



▲ Missile fury: A crater dug by a US Tomahawk cruise missile in the Arab camp in Khost.

refuge in Afghanistan after his eviction from Sudan in 1996. According to US Secretary of State, Madeleine Albright, 70 to 75 missiles were launched from American ships close to Pakistani waters in the Arabian Sea to hit targets in Sudan and Afghanistan. Seven of the missiles hit a pharmaceutical factory in Khartoum which the Americans believe was manufacturing chemical weapons, a charge categorically denied by Sudan.

"Not we, but America is the biggest

strike in broad daylight," says the bearded doctor. Ahmad Sarwar claims these camps imparted only religious education and had nothing to do with military or 'terrorist' training. "Did the Americans kill Osama? Only innocent people and students of religious schools were targeted. The attack destroyed the hostels, two mosques and a few houses of the civilian population," the doctor says angrily.

"Now we declare an open war on

America," says Habibur Rehman, 22, who received severe burns on half his body in the missile attack. "We will avenge the blood of our brethren and tell the Americans that faith is mightier than tanks and missiles," says Habib in a pain-choked voice. On the night of the attack, "I was woken up by the sound of a big explosion. There was dust and fire all around. People were running for shelter. I was in severe pain." But despite his ordeal, Habib is determined to go back to Afghanistan to complete his course. "Such strikes cannot stop us."

Habibur Rehman's fearlessness and determination to return to his camp in Afghanistan is surprising.

What is it that hardens a 22-year-old to the vagaries of wars?

Interviews with those returning from these camps after completing military training reveal that Afghani, Pakistani and Kashmiri teachers train the



▲ A new hero: Osama posters on sale.

Osama bin Laden has become a new source of inspiration for the radical Arab groups. The number of Osama's supporters from Arab countries presently hiding in Afghanistan is estimated to be around 200.



militants in elementary to medium and high-skilled guerrilla warfare on light and heavy weapons. The camps are run by the Arabs, Pakistanis and Kashmiris in coordination with each other under the supervision of the Taliban administration. Reportedly, an average of 250 people are trained at a time in each camp, and the duration of the course ranges from 40 or 90 days to six months.

Describing life inside the camps, one of

the mujahideen, Jasim, says the day starts with (Fajr) morning prayers and an hour of exercise, followed by classes till mid-day. "We get military lessons and practical training at the camp," says Jasim, adding that in the afternoons the mujahideen enjoy sports. Dars-i-Quran classes are held after dinner. The courses taught include training for normal combat to hit-and-run to sabotage. A number of educated people and students from

pre-medical and pre-engineering classes have joined the rank and file of the mujahideen. "Jihad is more important than studying in college," declared one of Bakht Zamin's lieutenants.

Established with the help of US and Pakistani secret agencies in the early '80s to train fighters to combat Soviet forces in Afghanistan, these camps have also been visited by William Casey, then director CIA, and the late General Akhtar Abdur Rehman, then director general of the ISI. At the time, several camps run by mujahideen commanders were operating in the provinces of

Kunar, Nangarhar and Khost in Afghanistan, sharing a border with Pakistan. And the mujahideen commandos had been trained by American instructors and Pakistani military officials, in line with guide books of the US Marines. Some of these guides were later recovered from the houses of Arabs in Peshawar, when there was a crackdown on extremists in 1993. Similar books translated into Arabic were also confiscated from a

camp in Jalalabad. The camps in Khost, supervised by Commander Jalaluddin Haqqani, accommodated most of the Arabs who crossed into Afghanistan in the wake of the crackdown.

Osama bin Laden has become a new source of inspiration for the radical Arab groups. Osama took refuge in Afghanistan in May 1996, after his eviction from Sudan. The number of Osama's supporters from Arab countries presently hiding in Afghanistan is estimated to be around 200. The 43-year-old tall and frail-looking Saudi dissident, who used to carry a Kalashnikov assault rifle on his shoulder, is escorted by a squad of his trusted supporters. Mindful of his security and the hunt launched by the United States, Osama keeps changing his sanctuary from Nangarhar to Kandahar to Khost. He has announced the formation of the International



Islamic Front for jihad against America and Israel and believes that his mujahideen would evict the infidel forces from the holy land, a reference to Saudi Arabia.

Meanwhile, back at the training camps in Afghanistan, radical groups angered by the American attack on their bases, have vowed to strike back and target installations of their enemy. "We will be back with full force and vengeance" says one Harkat leader. ■

Carrying a gun and wearing a guerilla-style battle jacket over an Afghan shalwar-kameez, a white turban on his head, Osama Bin Laden did not look like an Arab. Although he walked slowly with the help of a stick, as if suffering from back pain, and was obviously not in the best of health – not surprisingly given Afghanistan's harsh terrain – Bin Laden nonetheless cut a distinctive figure. And as soon as he started speaking, forcefully arguing his case in fluent Arabic and displaying deep emotion whenever he mentioned the name of Islam's holy places currently under "American and Israeli occupation," one could feel the zeal and strength of purpose emanating from the man.

These are the impressions that lingered after an encounter with the Saudi dissident on May 26 this year in the Al-Badr camp in the Khost province of southern Afghanistan. The elaborate programme chalked out to welcome him at the appointed spot for the assignation, meetings in the company of his right-hand man Shaikh Taseer Abdullah, and Dr. Ayman Al-Zawahiri, the leader of the Islamic Jihad of Egypt, demonstrated Bin Laden's organisational skills. He had successfully managed to put up a grand enough show in his remote, mountainous hideout to visibly impress the group of 14 journalists, including 13 Pakistanis and one Chinese reporter whom he had agreed to meet.

Heavy guns boomed as Bin Laden stepped out of his sturdy jeep with tinted windows, and rocket-launchers were fired in the air to celebrate his arrival. The gunfire continued for several minutes as Bin Laden, surrounded by over two dozen of his hooded bodyguards, walked towards the main building in the camp. The journalists were barred from taking pictures and the show was lifted only after Bin Laden, flanked by Dr. Al-Zawahiri and Shaikh Abdullah, was seated in front of a huge banner that read 'Allah is One and Mohammad (pbuh) is His Prophet.'

As it transpired, it was discovered much later that most of the gunners who fired the heavy guns and rocket-launchers weren't really Bin Laden's men. They were all veterans of the Afghan

'jihad' and were mostly Afghans and Pakistanis staying in the nearby Zhavara camp. Moreover, these weapons weren't part of Bin Laden's arsenal, having been transported there for the specific purpose of arranging his welcome. Also, Bin Laden's lieutenants made the journalists drive three hours through mountains, streams and a desert through a circuitous route to reach his Al-Badr camp, instead of driving half an hour on the direct *katcha* road linking his camp with the Salman Farsi base in Zhavara camp where they were put up for three nights waiting for the audience with Bin Laden. This was obviously one way of keeping the location of Bin Laden's camp a secret, and impressing upon the journalists how difficult it was to meet the Islamist Saudi businessman.

Bin Laden appears a simple and humble man, an unlikely millionaire or, as many western analysts and intelligence agents believe, a billionaire. He developed a fondness for the simple Afghan way of life, dress and food during the 1980s when he arrived in Afghanistan to participate in the 'jihad' against the Russian Red Army and Afghan Communists. Even now, he is fond of telling visitors how he slept during an encounter with the enemy and miraculously escaped sure death!

Many Afghans recall how Bin Laden happily roughed it out in the harsh conditions during the war, making available his resources to meet the needs of the mujahideen, especially the Arabs and volunteers from other Islamic countries who were fighting alongside the Afghans. Scores of Afghan widows, orphans and refugees also benefited from charities funded by Bin Laden at the time. His generosity naturally made him a popular man in Afghanistan. It is for these reasons that the Taliban are now refusing to hand Bin Laden over to the US. Besides, according to their deeply ingrained code of honour, Afghans, especially Paktoons, cannot conceive betraying someone who has taken refuge with them and sought their protection. And now, by standing up to the world's only superpower, Osama bin Laden has emerged as an even greater hero to many Muslims all over the world, not least the



# Myth and Man

America's 'Enemy Number One,' Saudi dissident Osama bin Laden has become the inspiration for Muslim militants fighting holy crusades around the globe.

Afghans.

Ironically, a decade ago, Bin Laden was a staunch ally of the US by virtue of their common goals: the defeat of the Soviets and their eviction from Afghanistan, and the demise of Communism. At that time, volunteers were welcomed to participate in the 'jihad,' and no questions were asked about their identity or ideology.

Members of assorted Islamic movements that lay scattered around the globe or were being hunted in their own countries, could not have asked for a better opportunity, not only to establish links with each other, but also to receive on-the-job military training. After their experience in the Afghan war, many of these men returned to their respective countries such as Algeria and the Philippines, to fight their indigenous political and military battles. 'Afghan Arabs' and 'Afghan Moros' are now familiar terms for the foreign veterans of the Afghan war.

Bin Laden returned to Saudi Arabia in 1989, after the Red Army withdrew from Afghanistan and the 'jihad' was over. While home, he reportedly began to support militant Islamic groups opposing pro-west Islamic governments, even as he continued to donate generously to varied charities. The arrival of the American troops in Saudi Arabia during the Gulf War in 1991 infuriated him, because he felt that Islam's two most sacred sites, Mecca and Medina, were now under US occupation

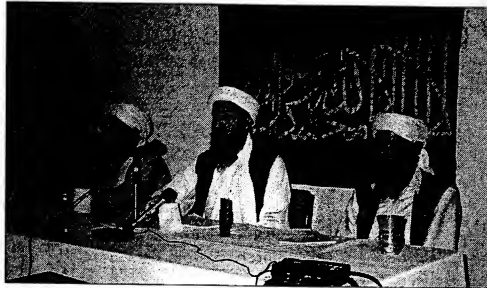
and these 'infidels,' the descendants of the Christian 'crusaders' were by their presence, defiling the holy land. He vowed then to fight until the US, British and French forces evacuated Saudi Arabia, and the Saudi royal family, which had invited them, was ousted from power. This stance, aided by American pressure, led to the wealthy Bin Laden family in Saudi Arabia disowning Osama, and forcing him to flee to Sudan. However, after finding a brief respite in Sudan, he was compelled to flee from there as well, reportedly

to capture the 43-year-old Saudi dissident have failed. Even the Tomahawk missile attack on his hideout in the Al-Badr camp in Khost on August 20, was wrongly timed and not very devastating. The building where he held his last press conference in May in that very camp, is largely intact, and most of the infrastructure, which is, contrary to reports, extremely basic and unsophisticated, is still usable.

During a recent visit to the Al-Badr and Zhavara camps in Khost, the first by any journalist after the August 20 US air

strikes, it was learnt that Bin Laden and his top aides were not present in the camps the night of the attack; they were probably in Kandahar, the headquarters of the Taliban Islamic Movement in south-western Afghanistan. And having survived the attack and now threatening the US with reprisals, Bin Laden is likely to keep the Americans on their toes, as long as he is able to keep his Taliban hosts

happy and is allowed to operate from the safety of his host country. He may sound boastful while threatening the US and Israel in view of his limited strength in terms of manpower and resources, but there is no denying the fact that this unassuming Saudi businessman has run circles round the world's most powerful nation and, in the process, become the inspiration for a large number of Muslims who increasingly feel Washington has wronged their religion and its followers. ■



▲ Osama Bin Laden and Dr. Ayman Al-Zawahiri of Egypt (right) and his right-hand man, Shaikh Taseer Abdullah on his left, during a press conference in Khost in Afghanistan in May, 1998.

due to pressure by the US. He finally found refuge in Afghanistan.

After blaming Bin Laden for almost all the attacks against its facilities and citizens, including those in Yemen, Somalia, New York and Saudi Arabia, the US has, over the years, employed every conceivable means to track him down and plug his financial infrastructure so that he is unable to patronise his network of supporters around the world.

However, to date, all American efforts

# The (Un)holy Nexus?

The close ideological and military ties between Pakistani religious extremists and the Taliban pose a grave threat to Pakistan's democratic order.

Prime Minister Sharif's sudden and surprising decision to impose a puritanical Islamic code through the Fifteenth constitutional amendment marks yet another milestone in the march of the Pakistani 'taliban' to conquer the land of the pure. The equally sudden and surprising emergence of the Afghan Taliban four years ago and their unexpected victories over their secular opposition in August bear grave implications for a secular democratic order in Pakistan. Indoctrinated by Pakistani religious parties, provided a base of operations on Pakistani soil, sponsored and supported by the Pakistani establishment, the fortunes of the Afghan Taliban and their Pakistani counterparts have been closely linked from the very start. It hardly comes as a surprise that the Taliban's military victories and their missionary zeal has infected their Pakistani brethren, infusing them with renewed fervour to bring undiluted Islamic rule to Pakistan.

The US military strikes against suspected terrorist bases on Taliban-controlled territory in Afghanistan have provided further impetus to the drive of Pakistani religious extremists to pressure the Pakistan government for Islamisation. Using the US military action to mobilise domestic support for



▲ The Taliban army: A base of operations on Pakistani soil.

their cause, clamouring for the supremacy of the Shariah in anti-US demonstrations day after day, the Islamist parties have successfully demonstrated their street power. Their bid to enforce a punitive and rigidly enforced Islamic order within Pakistan appears to have succeeded as a weak, unstable, domestically isolated government facing a concerted opposition campaign and a bleak economic future that clutches at religious straws for political survival.

The strategy of using religion to attain domestic legitimacy and to divert domestic dissent is hardly a new one. Nor is the linkage between Islamic extremism in Pakistan and Afghanistan

a recent phenomenon. Not so very long ago, the Zia regime chose to use Islam as a legitimising device to govern over an unwilling population. The Zia regime was also responsible for establishing institutionalised ties between its Islamist clients in Pakistan and Afghanistan. In 1977, General Ziaul Haq overthrew Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. Facing domestic resistance, Zia found it expedient to use Islam to legitimise his unpopular regime with the connivance of extremist Sunni religious parties such as the Jamaat-i-Islami. Following the Saur revolution in Afghanistan, Zia used Afghan Islamist groups based in Pakistan, such as the Jamiat-i-Islami of

41



▲ General Zia-ul-Haq: Godfather to the Afghan mujahideen.

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Burhanuddin Rabbani and the Hezb-i-Islami of Gulbaddin Hekmatyar, to channel support to the political opponents of the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) to enforce Pakistan's will over a traditional regional foe. Since these groups had a common interest with Pakistani religious parties in undermining the socialist Afghan regime, Pakistani religious extremists soon became actively involved in the Afghan jihad, with the knowledge and approval of the Zia junta.

As the resistance to the PDPA grew, the Soviets moved into Afghanistan to aid their Afghan allies. General Zia was provided the perfect pretext to justify military and material support for the Afghan rebels on the ground of the communist threat. Soviet military presence in Afghanistan's civil war also resulted in a partnership of convenience between the Zia regime, Pakistani and Afghan Islamist groups and the US. The Pakistani military identified suitable Afghan partners for their war of attrition against the Afghan regime, transformed Islamist groups into political parties and withheld patronage from more secular segments of the Afghan opposition. Sanctuary and cross-border facilities were provided by Pakistan to these Islamist organisations and groups. Pakistani authorities also directly disbursed substantial military and economic assistance from US as well as other, especially Saudi Arabian, sources to their Afghan clients.

In this struggle against godless communism, Islamic militants from the Middle East were also welcomed into the fold of the self-styled mujahideen by the Pakistani regime, with the knowledge and approval of the US. Amongst them was Osama bin Laden, a Saudi extremist dedicated to the cause of jihad. Pakistani religious parties did not lag far behind in providing volunteers for the Afghan civil war. In the process, close ties were forged between Afghan and Pakistani Sunni extremists. Zia's use of religion to acquire domestic legitimacy and to counter Shia dissent had included the

extension of economic and political patronage to Sunni fundamentalists, strengthening them vis-à-vis their Shia and secular opponents. The Afghan conflict gave religious rivals in Pakistan access to arms and military training. As a result, sectarian conflict in Pakistan acquired a far more violent hue than it had ever before in the country's history.

Even after the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan in 1988, and the declared avowal of Pakistan to distance itself from the internecine conflict in Afghanistan, the policy of extending military and economic assistance and a base of operations to chosen Afghan partners continued unabated. In its choice of Afghan partners, Pakistan continued to patronise extreme Afghan religious factions to forward its goal of establishing a suitably pliable regime in Kabul. Ironically, when Rabbani's Islamist party, the Jamiat-i-Islami, finally succeeded in capturing the Afghan capital in 1992, its ethnic composition and its propensity for accommodating left-leaning forces was unacceptable to Pakistan's authoritative decision-makers.

Although Pakistan preferences in Afghanistan remained unchanged, the end of the cold war and the Soviet Union's demise led to a US re-examination of its Afghan policy. US governments began to view with disfavour and unease their former fundamentalist Afghan allies as they extended their jihad beyond Afghan soil. By the mid-1990s, battle-hardened Algerian, Sudanese, Egyptian, Pakistani and other Islamic warriors were involved in militant activity in a number of Middle Eastern states, as well as within the US itself, such as the bombing of the World Trade Center in 1993.

Within Pakistan, the Afghan civil war continued to contribute to violent sectarian strife as arms flowed across the Pakistan-Afghan border and the Pakistani extremists brought their holy war home, using the platform of militant Sunni parties and groups. There were some cosmetic changes in Pakistan's Afghan policy as a result of

US pressure, including the expulsion of a number of Arab and African extremists to Afghanistan. However, Pakistani decision-makers had far from abandoned their ultimate goal of controlling Afghanistan's political fortunes. In fact, their desire to direct the course of Afghan politics acquired a new urgency, since the end of the cold war presented fuel-starved Pakistan an opportunity to access the oil and gas resources of Central Asia via Afghan territory.

Pakistani impatience for a quick and acceptable end to the Afghan civil war was a major factor behind its backing of the Taliban – a Pushtun group emerging from theological schools in Balochistan and the NWFP, run by the Jamiat-i-Ulema-i-Islam (Fazlur Rehman). The Taliban teamed up with Pushtun commanders and religious leaders against Rabbani's forces and took over the western province of Kandahar bordering on Balochistan. They then consolidated their control over most of the Pushtun areas adjacent to Pakistani territory. After a series of reverses, the Taliban finally succeeded in moving towards the north and the west.

The Taliban's advance towards Shia, Tajik and Hazara areas resulted in the formation of the Northern Alliance, composed of Rabbani's Tajik-dominated Jamiat-i-Islami, Uzbek General Dostum's Jumbish-i-Milli and the Shia Hazara-dominated Hizb-i-Wahdat. The Taliban's imposition of an orthodox Sunni code in the territories controlled by them brought Iran more openly on the side of the Northern Alliance, concerned about the threat to Afghan Shias and the existence of a hostile sectarian force on their borders. The Sunni extremist militia was unacceptable to Russia and the Central Asian republics, who were concerned about the spread of Islamic extremism into the southern reaches of the Commonwealth of Independent States.

Iran, Russia and the Central Asian republics have accused Pakistan of active military involvement in Afghanistan and have attributed the Taliban's military prowess to the direct

involvement of the Pakistan military, especially after the capture of Mazar-i-Sharif and other Taliban advances into the western and northern provinces controlled by the Northern Alliance. Rejecting these charges, Pakistan has reiterated its impartiality in the Afghan internecine conflict, a claim that is difficult to sustain given the fact that Pakistan was the very first state to accord recognition to the Taliban after their capture of Kabul in September 1996.

The Taliban's recent military successes have caused great jubilation amongst the ranks of their Pakistani supporters, including segments of the decision-making apparatus and their Islamist allies such as the JUI-F. However, the prospect of a Taliban-controlled Afghanistan is viewed as a threat to Pakistani security by liberal, secular political and opinion-making circles in Pakistan. It is feared that Iran's ire, which has increased manifold as a result of the Taliban refusal to hand over captured Iranian diplomats and citizens after the capture of Mazar-i-Sharif, will rebound on Pakistan. Iran holds Pakistan responsible for the safety of its captive citizens in Afghanistan and has warned the Taliban that it would not hesitate to use force, if necessary, to protect them. If rumours about anti-Shia atrocities by the Taliban, following their latest military conquests are true, then a more aggressive Iranian response is more than likely as is increased sectarian tensions in Pakistan. Moreover, should the Taliban ignore Russian and Central Asian warnings to refrain from spreading their extremist message across CIS borders, Pakistan will inevitably be held responsible for the actions of its Afghan allies. The result will be heightened political tensions with Russia and the CIS and no Central Asian gas pipeline.

Even if it so desires, the Taliban's aversion to negotiation and diplomatic bargaining will make it very difficult for Pakistan to persuade them to modify their internal and external behaviour. The inability of the Taliban to see reason has been best demonstrated by

the Osama bin Laden affair. The US decision to use military force against purported terrorist targets in Afghanistan was primarily a muscle-flexing exercise, meant to serve as a warning to the bin Laden's Taliban hosts that the US had the military ability

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and the political will to use unilateral force where and when its perceived vital interests were threatened. However, in the wake of US military action and threats, the Taliban are still unwilling to expel bin Laden from Afghan soil. Hence there is no guarantee that the Saudi millionaire will not use his Afghan base once again to strike at US civilian or military targets. The US is paying a high price for its use of Islamic extremism to forward its interests in Afghanistan.

Given Pakistan's unstable domestic environment, its geographic proximity to Afghanistan and the extent of its

involvement in the Afghan civil war, the price that Pakistan will pay will be far greater. Pakistani religious seminaries provide moral and material support to Afghan Sunni extremists and remain the

revolution is around the corner for neighbouring Pakistan.

US military action in Afghanistan has also had a domestic backlash for the Sharif government. Pakistani airspace

type theocracy. Attempting to appease the resurgent religious right and to mask its failure to resolve pressing economic and political problems, the Muslim League has decided to follow



▲ Afghan refugee camps: A home away from home.

main recruiting grounds and a base of operations for the Taliban within Pakistani territory. Moreover, large numbers of Pakistani religious activists have fought alongside their Afghan allies in every Taliban offensive. And Sunni Islamist parties in Pakistan are directly involved in helping the Taliban to assert their authority through a punitive Islamic order.

The extent of the involvement of Pakistani religious parties in the Afghan civil war has been exposed by the US military strikes in Afghanistan which resulted in a number of Pakistani casualties. Questioned about Pakistani casualties, Foreign Minister Sartaj Aziz claimed that it was impossible to prevent the flow of Pakistani "volunteers" for the Taliban cause across the porous Pakistan-Afghan border. The Taliban leadership on its part has also revealed that Pakistani religious activists have been given administrative responsibilities to enforce Taliban rule in newly conquered territories. The Taliban victories in Afghanistan are seen as a victory for orthodox Sunni Islam by their Pakistani supporters and as an indication that a Sunni Islamic

was used by the US for its missile strikes against bin Laden's bases in landlocked Afghanistan. Questions have since been raised, within and outside parliament, of the government's role. For Sharif's critics, if the government is correct in claiming that it had no previous knowledge of the US strikes, then it has failed to safeguard Pakistan's territorial integrity. Other critics, particularly the Islamist parties, however, accuse the government of conniving with the US, initially by providing key information that linked bin Laden to the bombing of the US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, and then by consenting to the use of Pakistan's airspace for US military strikes against an Islamic target.

In fact, the US military action has provided the Taliban's Pakistani counterparts the perfect pretext to mobilise public support and to undermine the Sharif government. Holding demonstration after anti-US demonstration, Sunni religious parties ranging from the JUI-F to the Sipah-e-Sahaba have raised slogans of jihad against the US and called for the imposition of the Shariah, replacing parliamentary democracy by a Taliban-

the legacy of Zia-ul-Haq by attempting to use religion to gain domestic legitimacy.

General Zia, however, failed to win over the hearts and minds of the Pakistani people through the manipulation of religion. Sharif's avowed intent to impose the Islamic Shariah through a constitutional amendment is equally unlikely to enhance his internal legitimacy in a climate of political and sectarian polarisation and an economic crisis of unprecedented dimensions. However, the battle for political control will, once again, be fought inside and outside parliament on the issue of Islam and Islamic governance. This renewed focus on religion, no matter how opportunistic, will give Sunni religious parties an opportunity of highlighting their demands for an orthodox Islamic order. In this atmosphere of heightened intolerance, the close ideological and military ties between Pakistani religious extremists and their Taliban allies could fuel further political instability and sectarian violence, making Pakistan itself a potential target of terrorism from the camps of its Afghan allies. ■



# War Games

By Rizwan Qureshi

*Most madrassah students receive some modicum of military training during their academic careers at any one of the 4,500 or so seminary schools across Pakistan...*

If the more vocal members of religious circles in Afghanistan and the Frontier province are to be believed, the pan-Islamic jihad of the Afghan people and their Pakistani and Arab allies has entered a new phase, with Mulla Mohammad Omar and Osama bin Laden leading the way.

"We have defeated the communists and now we must defeat the forces of Nasuara (Christians) who have become tools in the hands of the Yahood (Jews)," says Dr Ahmad Sarwar, a surgeon at Kabul's Chaharsad Bister Hospital. Dr Sarwar, incidentally, is also a volunteer of the Harkatul Mujahideen, an Islamic militant group fighting in both Afghanistan and Kashmir.

Seated in an eerie hole-in-the-wall room buried deep inside a narrow by-lane off Peshawar's Jamrud Road, which Harkat activists use as their office, Dr Sarwar told the *Herald* that the time has come for Muslims to take their jihad beyond the borders of Afghanistan. Hardline religious groups such as the Harkat apparently believe that acts like the car-bombing of US embassies in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam may be one way of carrying the jihad into "enemy" territory. For instance, when Harkat chief Maulana Fazlur Rahman Khalil publicly vowed during an August 22 press conference in Islamabad to avenge last month's US missile strikes, he was clearly threatening Washington with an offensive on

American interests worldwide.

Besides acts of outright aggression, there are other ways to take the jihad further afield as well, as a moderate madrassah cleric points out. "Missiles cannot help you capture territory, but men of faith can," says Maulana Hasan Jan, a former JUI (F) MNA and top

some modicum of military training during their academic careers at any one of the 4,500 or so seminary schools across Pakistan. Some students opt to spend their vacations undergoing formal military training at camps located in Afghanistan and Azad Kashmir. Others end up receiving short courses in the use of light assault weapons as and when the Taliban government requisitions reinforcements to consolidate its campaign inside Afghanistan.

"We were given one week of training [somewhere in the eastern Ningarhar province of Afghanistan] in how to use a kalashnikov in various battlefield situations," says Amin Jan, a 19-year-old Pakistani who is a sixth-year student at a seminary in Azakhel, 25 kilometers east of Peshawar. "Thereafter, we were sent out on checkpoint duties between Jalalabad and Kabul." Jan was one of about 15,000 Pakistani and Afghan students from the Frontier province who crossed into Afghanistan following the capture



**Early learning: young pupils at a madrassah in Khost**

administrator of the Madrassah Imdadul Uloom at the Masjid-i-Darvesh, situated in the heart of the Peshawar cantonment area. "If we can manage to put the Taliban on American soil, we can capture the entire United States." Behind this optimism stand two decades of the Afghan war, and the flooring of one superpower.

Most madrassah students receive

of Mazar-e-Sharif by the Taliban on August 8.

Like Jan, Qari Mohammad Naim, a teacher at the Madrassah Imdadul Uloom, has just returned from Afghanistan after spending three months imparting training in light weapons to "young madrassah boys" at a makeshift camp near Bagram, a strategic airbase 50 kilometers north of Kabul currently



**Shell-shocked: residents of a village in Khost that was struck by 10 US Cruise missiles**

held by Ahmad Shah Masood. "Such exercises are meant to prepare the boys for their duties at a checkpoint or in a weapons collection squad," says Qari Naim, 30, who has received formal guerrilla training and has fought on several war fronts over the last four years.

All madrassahs in the Frontier province closed down for an extraordinary two-week vacation in early August when the Taliban prepared to attack Mazar. "Three days before the fall of Mazar, we received a request from Mulla Mohammad Omar to send in the boys. The Taliban would need to disarm the people, man the new checkpoints falling to them, and fill the gaps created by the overstretching of the Taliban's ranks," says Maulana Samiul Haq, chief of his own faction of the JUI and top administrator of the renowned Darul Uloom Haqqania at Akora Khatak, 65 kilometers east of Peshawar.

So when the August 20 missile attack on Afghanistan came, more than half the students of the Frontier's major religious seminaries were actually in Afghanistan,

performing war duties. But enough students had stayed behind in Pakistan to put up a convincing show of strength on the morning after the attack.

"I heard about the attack on the BBC's 11 o'clock bulletin [on the night of August 20]," says Qari Fayazur Rahman, chief of the Madrassah Markazi Darul Qurra, situated in the congested Namakmandi locality of downtown Peshawar. "Soon afterwards I started receiving phone calls from those who were heartbroken by the news. They wanted me to throw open the gates of the mosque and let the boys out to hold an agitation. But I told them that everyone was asleep and that we would do everything in our power to hold a successful agitation in the morning."

The next day, the Taliban came out in full strength after the Friday prayers. From Akora Khatak to Kohat and from Chitral to Miramshah, they held huge processions, blocked roads and highways, and delivered fiery speeches against the Americans and their "lackeys in Pakistan." In Peshawar, the mood was more threatening. Backed by the city's huge Afghan population, students here attempted to storm the American Centre and the British Council, and clashed with the police. More than 15 people were injured in these skirmishes. In Jalalabad, meanwhile, a Taliban mob attacked and shot two United Nations officials, one of whom, an Italian military official, died the following day.

"The accuracy with which the missiles hit their targets in Zhavar compels us to believe that they were launched from land," Jalaudun Haqqani, a former student of the Darul Uloom Haqqania and the Taliban minister for border affairs, told the *Herald* in an interview in Miramshah on August 22. The innuendo clearly pointed to the possible use of Pakistani soil for the attack.

In a related development, the Taliban authorities in an unpublished message advised Pakistani diplomats in Kabul, Herat and Kandahar to avoid appearing in public because their lives may be in danger. There are also reports of a Taliban protest lodged with Islamabad over the latter's "permission to let the Americans use its soil to launch the missiles" which destroyed "religious seminaries" in Khost.

On August 22, at a high-level meeting in Islamabad chaired by the interior minister, Pakistani officials expressed apprehensions that "terrorist groups and their sympathisers... may resort to terrorist attacks in this country." During the meeting, which was attended by the chiefs of the Inter-Services Intelligence, the Intelligence Bureau, the Federal Investigation Agency and the Civil Aviation Authority, as well as senior administration and police officials, special instructions were issued to the security agencies "to keep an eye on the movement of groups linked to Osama bin Laden."

Today, officials of the NWFP home department believe the storm of protest has blown over, but they are still on their toes. More than 100 western diplomats and NGO officials who were shifted to Islamabad under tight security at three a.m. on August 21 have started returning to Peshawar, albeit under strict instructions not to visit public places or use diplomatic registration plates on their vehicles.

Meanwhile, thousands of Taliban are making their way back to their madrassahs at the end of the extraordinary two-week vacation, to resume their lessons in religion, philosophy, mathematics and the New World Order.

"Aiming missiles at Osama is as ridiculous as using an anti-aircraft gun to shoot a flea," thunders Qari Fayazur Rahman in front of his turbaned students at a post-Asr sermon. "They are actually aiming at Islam. This is what the New World Order is all about. But they will shortly meet their doom, for the name that shall remain supreme above all others is the name of Allah."

"No doubt, no doubt," murmured the Taliban piously. ■

# Bumper Crop

Opium from Afghanistan is likely to hit the world market in a big way this season.

Independent surveys reveal that Afghanistan will flood the world market with an estimated 2500 metric tons of opium this season. After Burma, Afghanistan is the second largest poppy cultivating country in the world.

However, officials from the United Nations Drug Control Programme (UNDCP) put the estimated yield of dry opium at about 2300 metric tons, the amount Afghanistan produced the previous year. Of the country's 32 provinces, 8 cultivate the poppy crop every year. They are supported by the local administration and by the Northern Alliance led by ousted Afghan president, Burhanuddin Rabbani.

There is an unusual arrangement between the UNDCP and Taliban authorities for the eradication of the poppy crop in areas controlled by student militia. "Since the UN does not recognise the Taliban as the legitimate rulers of Afghanistan, the UNDCP has to work out a memorandum of understanding with them instead of a formal agreement," says a UNDCP official who added that both sides were committed to bringing the opium production down to zero by the year 2000.

The UNDCP is planning to resume its developmental activities in the provinces of Kandahar and Helmand. The UN had earlier suspended these projects because of the Taliban's opposition to them. "We have held talks with the Taliban to help them in the revamping and recommissioning of the wool factory in Helmand," said the UNDCP official. The factory and the provincial capital of the province, Lashkargah, were established during

former monarch Zahir Shah's era in the late 1960s, with the financial assistance of the United States.

According to last year's statistics, Helmand is the major opium-producing province of Afghanistan and its annual dried opium yield is 1507.49 metric tons. This is followed by Nangarhar at 634.15 metric tons. Parts of the Balkh and Baghlan provinces and many districts of Badakhshan, (Rabbani's native province) produce opium under the control of the opposition alliance. The official said the UNDCP was working for the revival of the old industrial zone in Kandahar in order to create job opportunities for the locals.

However, Taliban authorities have some reservations. "The UN has to recognise the Islamic government of Afghanistan if it is interested in the eradication of opium production," says a Taliban official from the Nangarhar province. It is worth mentioning that more than 100 mobile heroin laboratories owned by Afghan and Pakistan drug-pushers have been set up on the Pak-Afghan border. These labs can be shifted across the border whenever there is pressure from the Taliban or Pakistani authorities.

As part of the memorandum signed by the governor of Nangarhar, Maulvi Abdul Kabir, and Giovanni Quaglia, chief of operations UNDCP in Vienna, on April 29, Taliban authorities burnt

two metric tons of opium which they collected from farmers in Kama, Ali Shang, Alingar and Kargahi districts of the southern provinces of Nangarhar, Logar and Kunar.

The burning ceremony took place in June and was also attended by UNDCP officials. However, the Afghan government continues to tax the

opium produce. The two sides have agreed that no poppy cultivation should be allowed in 'new areas' ruled by the Taliban to "control the balloon effect." The estimated yield in these 'new areas' is around eight metric tons according to UNDCP sources but they say they have been lenient with farmers in the collection drive.

Afghan journalists returning from Taliban headquarters this week also reported that the opium yield might be affected this season due to the fungal disease that hit the crop in Kandahar, Orazgan and Helmand provinces.

However, the situation in the poppy-growing areas in Pakistan has improved over the last decade. A grand operation was launched by the authorities in Dir, Bajaur and Mohmand agencies to destroy the standing poppy crop in April and May, amidst resistance and violent protest by farmers against the government's anti-poppy drive. Meanwhile, the UNDCP has warned that all developmental projects will be stopped in Pakistan if it fails to comply with its commitment of zero opium production by 1998. ■



# Osama's World

*Osama bin Laden's most outstanding achievement to date is that he has shifted the reliance of the so-called pan-Islamic jihad, in terms of both resources and ideology, from individual states to transnational networks...*

From a nameless Ikhwān volunteer to America's Public Enemy Number One, Osama bin Laden has come a long way. The very agencies that built the Saudi guerrilla fighter into a cult figure are now hard pressed to guess where he will strike next. It is a war which no less a person than the US secretary of state expects to be a "long-term struggle" and "a war of the future."

Perhaps bin Laden's most



**Bin Laden: globalising 'jihad'**

outstanding achievement to date is that he has shifted the reliance of the so-called pan-Islamic jihad, in terms of both resources and ideology, from individual states to transnational networks. A multi-millionaire who made a fortune in the construction business, bin Laden achieved fame and glory on the soil of Afghanistan and is today a household name around the world.

Bin Laden was deeply involved in

the Afghan 'jihad' against Soviet occupation right from 1979. Besides fighting alongside his brothers in arms, he used his road construction equipment to blast massive tunnels in the Zjazji mountains, just across the border from Pakistan's Kurram Agency, to create guerrilla hospitals and weapons dumps. In 1992 he left Afghanistan, disgusted by the factional fighting that broke out following the abdication of president Dr Najibullah. Thereafter, he lived in Sudan until 1996, when he was expelled by the government in Khartoum on the request of the US.

Of the many acts of international terrorism of which bin Laden has been accused, the most prominent are the bombing of a US base in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia, in June 1996 which killed 19 Americans, and repeated attacks on the Egyptian police allegedly by his Arab fighters from Afghanistan. For his part, bin Laden has always denied these charges.

Stripped of Saudi nationality and expelled from Sudan, bin Laden returned to Afghanistan on May 18, 1996 and set up a base at Torabora in the Agam area of Ningarhar. He subsequently shifted to Kandahar and later revived the Al-Badr base in Khost.

Once a commander of thousands of Arab fighters whom he brought to Afghanistan, bin Laden has seen the ranks of his supporters shrink since the onset of the civil war, with even as friendly a government as Pakistan arresting or eliminating his men on often flimsy grounds. But he is still reported to have a following of between 200 to 400 Arab veterans

of the Afghan war against Soviet occupation.

For the last three years, he has been engaged in a virulent campaign to evict western forces from Saudi Arabia and "liberate" Muslim holy places. In May 1998, at a high-profile ceremony at his Al-Badr camp in Khost, he formally launched his International Islamic Front against the US and Israel.

Partly due to such pursuits, bin Laden continues to live dangerously. Three attempts have been made on his life so far — two in Sudan and one in Jalalabad. Ironically, all three came from within the ranks of his trusted bodyguards.

Bin Laden also has his opponents among the Taliban establishment, more prominent among them being Kandahar governor Mulla Mohammad Hasan and Mulla Mohammad Rabbani, head of the Taliban interim ruling council. But he is widely admired by the Taliban rank and file for his courage and fighting prowess. Besides, the Amirul Momineen, Mulla Mohammad Omar, has been treating him as a guest in characteristic Afghan fashion, and has refused all requests or demands for his extradition.

However, the latest US missile attacks on Afghanistan, and the impact they have had on bin Laden's popularity in the Islamic world, may have caused some tensions between him and Mulla Omar, forcing the latter to publicly snub bin Laden, telling him not to run a "parallel government in Afghanistan." The missile strikes may also have strengthened the position of bin Laden's opponents in Afghanistan, who now have an added argument in their favour — neutralising him in the interest of the government in Kabul, which badly needs international recognition and donors' funds for reconstruction.

For his part, Osama bin Laden has made his peace with Mulla Omar by promising not to comment publicly on Afghan affairs. But with his long-standing struggle and new-found popularity, it will be interesting to see where he goes from here. ■

— Rizwan Qureshi

48

# 76 killed as rocket attacks on Kabul city continue

Nation 980922

KABUL (AFP) - Another 10 civilians were killed and another 10 wounded when a heavy rocket hit northern residential areas of the Afghan capital Monday afternoon, residents told AFP.

The heavy rocket, the second to hit Kabul on Monday, landed in a residential area in the Khair Khana vicinity, razing a two-storey house and partially destroying at least four others.

Local rescuers were desperately digging through debris for survivors.

Earlier around noon a rocket fell on wasteland, without causing any injury.

The latest strike on Monday raises the death toll in two days of rocket attack to 76. At least 66 people were killed and 215 wounded in devastating attacks on crowded areas of Kabul on Sunday.

Residents believe the missile attacks have been launched by the forces of key anti-Taliban commander Ahmad Shah Masood, positioned 25 kilometers (15 miles) north of Kabul.

However, Mohammad Mohaqiq, an opposition spokesman in a statement over Radio Iran denied this saying its forces only attacked military installations.

An AFP reporter saw volunteers retrieve the bodies of two young girls from the house which received a direct hit. A man was recovered unhurt from the debris.

The rocket caused a two-meter (six feet) deep and five-meter wide crater in the front yard of the house. It shattered walls and windows of nearby houses.

The casualties were mostly among women and children who were working on a carpet weaving loom in the

house.

"My dear kids, how can I find you from under piles of ruins," a surviving father cried as rescue workers carried the body of his young daughter on a stretcher.

"Look at this. They kill our children in the name of Islam," shouted another wailing man carrying the dismembered leg of a child just dug out.

The moving scene triggered an outburst from the crowd of Taliban soldiers and confused residents.

Relief workers said the chances of survival for those still under the ruins remained bleak as the pace of the rescue operation conducted by local residents without proper equipment was slow.

Ambulances of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) were rushing the casualties to hospitals.

No other international organization is currently present in Kabul to assist the local authorities in handling the situation.

An ICRC spokesman expressed concern over what he said was action "condemned by international law."

Juan Martinez said some of the city hospitals also lacked enough materials to treat the wounded.

The ICRC has distributed blankets and plastic sheaths among 169 families, the spokesman said adding the committee was prepared to cope with the situation.

Several residents meanwhile accused Masood forces of deliberately targeting their houses.

"This cannot be a mistake," a wailing student, Mohammad Sadeq, said. He said Masood was victimizing the

population of Kabul for his own vested interests.

Masood was driven out of Kabul about two years ago when the Taliban religious militia ousted the government of former president Burhanuddin Rabbani. The militia now controls around 90 percent of Afghanistan.

China is concerned about the current tension between Iran and the Islamic Taliban in Afghanistan, diplomatic sources said Monday.

The face-off means Beijing has to tread a careful path between Iran, with whom it has close economic ties, and Pakistan, which supports the Taliban and with which China has a close relationship, a western diplomat said.

On Monday the Chinese foreign ministry said it was deeply concerned that the situation "poses a threat to the peace and security of the region."

It said Beijing hoped a so-called six plus two meeting on Afghanistan which opens Monday in New York on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly would push warring factions towards "a peaceful solution."

UN chief Kofi Annan convened the meeting, at Washington's urging, as tensions rose sharply between Shia Moslem Iran and the Sunni Moslem Taliban following the killing of Iranian diplomats in northern Afghanistan.

On Sunday the conflict between the Taliban and their Iranian-backed rivals returned to Kabul where rocket attacks by opposition forces killed at least 66 and wounded another 215 civilians.

UN officials are not optimistic of a breakthrough at Monday's one-and-a-half hour session. The meeting is to be

attended by the foreign ministers of China, Iran, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, plus the United States and Russia.

China will have to steer a middle course so as not to offend either Pakistan or Iran. "China is one of the few remaining countries in which Pakistan can have confidence. Diplomats hope China can ask Pakistan to persuade the Taliban not to go too far," said a diplomat, adding it was unclear if Beijing was prepared to play such a role.

China is trying to deal with a Moslem separatist movement in its north-western province of Xinjiang.

It is concerned that a total victory in the Afghan civil war by the Taliban would leave the hardline movement as a destabilizing influence in the region and a focus for Moslem unrest within its own borders, diplomats said.

But it would not favour an Iranian attack on the Taliban which could be just as destabilizing.

The United States has frequently accused China of providing nuclear technology to both Iran and Pakistan. Beijing has said any cooperation was for purely peaceful purposes and has since been halted with Tehran.

Taliban's brand of extremism. The Saudi press has accused the Taliban of engaging in an excessive idealism that has nothing to do with Islam and called on it to adopt a more realistic stance. The fundamentalist militia, which controls most of Afghanistan, claims it is promoting the purest form of Islam.

Arab Emirates is the only other country to recognise the Taliban. The oil-rich kingdom is known to have given substantial financial assistance to the four-year-old ultra-orthodox Sunni Moslem militia which emerged from religious schools in 1994. But relations between Saudi Arabia and the Taliban have grown strained in recent months. The kingdom has said it does not approve of the

## Riyadh pressures Taliban for extradition of bombing suspects

Nation 980922

RIYADH, Sept 23 (AFP) - Saudi Arabia has frozen its relations with the Taliban to push for the extradition of suspects in a 1996 anti-US bombing who are hiding in Afghanistan, a Riyadh-based diplomat said Wednesday.

"The Saudis are sure that suspects in the Dhahran attack are in Afghanistan under the protection of (Saudi dissident) Ossama bin Laden," the diplomat told AFP, asking for his name not to be used.

The bomb attack in June 1996 killed 19 US soldiers at their barracks in Khobar, near the eastern city of Dhahran.

It was to obtain the extradition of suspects in this bombing that Saudi Arabia decided to recall its charge

d'affaires from Kabul and expel the Taliban's representative from Riyadh, the diplomat said.

But the Taliban's charge d'affaires in Riyadh, Mulawi Shihab Eddin, on Wednesday said his expulsion from the kingdom was linked to the militia's support of Bin Laden.

"I believe that the Saudi decision is linked to the asylum given by the Taliban to Ossama bin Laden," the diplomat told AFP.

"If it is proved that Bin Laden led an attack against Saudi Arabia, the Taliban will take the necessary measures," Eddin said in reference to suggestions that Bin Laden may have masterminded attacks on US interests in the king-

dom. The United States has accused Bin Laden of masterminding a string of terrorist attacks, including those on two US embassies in East Africa early in August.

The US State Department believes Bin Laden was responsible for the 1995 Riyadh bombing which killed five US soldiers and the 1996 Dhahran bombing.

Eddin did not elaborate on what "measures" might be taken, but the Taliban have already ruled out extradition.

Taliban leader Mullah Mohammad Omar said Wednesday the Afghan militia would not be swayed by outside pressure after Saudi Arabia withdrew its envoy from Kabul.

"As a proud Moslem nation, we will make all our decisions on the basis of principles of Islam," Omar told the Afghan Islamic Press (AIP). But the reclusive Taliban leader did not directly criticise the Saudi decision or refer to its political and diplomatic implications. Saudi Arabia formally recognised the Taliban as the legitimate rulers of Afghanistan in May, following a similar decision by Pakistan. The United



News  
980929

# Health care in critical condition in Afghanistan

KABUL: As most humanitarian aid groups have pulled out of the beleaguered capital of Kabul, even a minor illness can be fatal in today's Afghanistan.

The few foreigners left behind by the International Red Cross and the World Health Organization race around trying to help local health workers to keep dozens of clinics and 14 hospitals running with few medical supplies.

After two decades of war, Afghanistan is an all too easy place to get sick or wounded. Apart from causing injuries, artillery, rocket and mortar fire have wrecked the city's water, sewage and sanitation systems, inviting epidemics like the current cholera outbreak in Kabul.

Dr. Mohammed Daim Kakar, a director for WHO, the United Nations' health agency, said medical supplies were critically needed by the infectious diseases control center.

But even treating minor maladies is a daunting job in overflowing civilian hospitals that often have to turn away the sick.

"We are short of everything,

medicines, equipment, doctors," said Dr Maruf Aram, deputy head of the medical department at Aliabad hospital.

Outside Aliabad, a teaching hospital that used to attract the country's best doctors, patients in unwashed clothes carry their own intravenous drips as they shuffle around the compound. A white and red ambulance, though much needed, sits in the parking lot, sagging on a flat tire, its headlights smashed.

Beneath the trees, patients lie on the grass and chat with visiting kins. An old man, barely able to hold his head up, gets a haircut from his son.

Not even the original Aliabad survives. Four years of warfare between rival Islamic factions left the building in ruins, forcing relocation to a shabby maternity hospital, where the steel beds are barely covered with tattered sheets.

Most of the hospital's windows are broken, and the building's last coat of paint is little more than a memory.

The hospital is so short of drugs

that patients have to buy them at local markets. If they can't afford them, "that's their problem," Aram said.

Not even doctors have money, because few have seen their roughly 10-dollar a month (33,000 Afghanis) wage in four or five months.

The Red Cross says it cannot fill the gap left by the departure of humanitarian groups.

Even before the aid groups pulled out, health care was a sensitive issue because the Taliban ordered the segregation of male and female patients and dismissed female health care workers. Out of necessity, Taliban leaders relented and allowed many female nurses and doctors to return to work, but insisted they wear all-enveloping robes and treat only women. Then the Taliban ordered all women to work and be treated at one hospital — the Rabia Balkhi hospital.

According to a WHO survey, there are 1,157 hospital and clinic beds available for women and 1,531 beds for men. Unfortunately, substandard health care is one area of gender equality in Afghanistan. —AP

## Security for Afghan envoys FP beefed up

980924

By AIMAL KHAN

PESHAWAR - Security around Afghan Consulate and diplomats' residences in Peshawar has been beefed up in the wake of intelligence reports of possible terrorist attacks on key Afghan government officials in Pakistani.

Earlier, against the backdrop of increasing tension between Taliban-ruled Afghanistan and Iran, Taliban and Pakistani law-enforcing agencies had received reports that an important regional actor of the Afghan imbroglio had sent its agents to plan and execute terrorist attacks on key Taliban representatives in Peshawar.

Security agencies tightened the security around the sensitive Taliban installations in Peshawar after reports of terror plot.

Few days back mysterious vehicles with tinted glasses and fake registration numbers were seen around the residences and offices of Afghan diplomats and Taliban leaders. The reports said a neighbouring country had hatched a plan to attack Taliban targets in Peshawar.

For this purpose, some suspected foreigners were already spotted in Peshawar reportedly contacting people for the task and spending a lot of money in this regard.

This scribe has seen the reports which contain details of the terrorist plan's nature and number plates of hired vehicles and at least name and addresses of six foreigners who were currently in Peshawar to mastermind these activities.

Taliban sources claimed that extensive meetings had taken place in the Peshawar-based consulate of one of the regional powers to plan the terrorist acts. One such important meeting was also held at the embassy of the same country in Islamabad reportedly on Monday last to finalise the strategy.

## Uranium recovered FP 980924 from arrested Afghans

By IMTIAZ HUSSAIN

PESHAWAR - In an operation at a Nasirbagh refugee camp, local police late Tuesday night arrested two Afghans and recovered from their possession a radioactive element (uranium).

Sources confided to *The Frontier Post* that the Afghan nationals had almost struck a deal with a foreign party when the NWFP police got a lead with regard to the bargain.

The material, reportedly brought from the Central Asian state of Kazakhstan, was about to be sold for \$ 1 lakh, a police official disclosed.

The accused were identified as Mujahid, son of Hakim Khan, a resident of the Canal Colony, and Ghulam Hazrat, son of Sakhi Dad, who lives in the Gharibabad area of Tehkal. "They are being handed over today to a joint interrogation team (JIT) of police, Intelligence Bureau (IB) and Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) for grilling," the official added.

Details have it that the police had a tip-off about the presence of an Afghan in Canal Colony, where foreigners repeatedly dashed for striking a purchase deal with the "refugee."

On receiving information, police raided the house of Mujahid and arrested him. During the initial interrogation, the Afghan told the police

about the eight to ten kilograms of uranium he had kept in the house of a relative in Gharibabad area.

Police raided the house of Ghulam Hazrat and recovered a container of the radioactive metal used in making atomic bombs.

The interrogators managed to worm out the secret from the accused that he was handed the uranium by Engineer Abdullah from Rawalpindi. Mujahid was offered his pound of flesh for reaching a deal with some foreigners.

Police sources divulged that they, with the cooperation of Punjab police, had raided Abdullah's residence in Rawalpindi, but he had left for Quetta along with his three wives.

It merits a mention that a group of Afghans and local influentials has actively been involved in the uranium business. The origin, dating and grade of the metal could not be confirmed immediately, "but its business has been going on."

Of late there have been reports that the group had also contacted "official quarters" for supplying the precious metal, but the bid did not come to fruition.

An expert confided that the uranium, needing a proper storage temperature, often lost its value because "ignorant traffickers pay little attention to this vital technical aspect."

## FP 981012 Masood accuses Pakistan of helping Taliban

BONN (NNI) — A prominent and powerful Afghan opposition commander, Ahmed Shah Masood, has ruled out the possibility of restoration of peace in Afghanistan "unless Pakistani troops are called back from that country".

He made the remarks during an interview with a German daily. He alleged that 28,000 Pakistani troops are fighting along side the with Taliban in Afghanistan. He said that if Islamabad withdraws its political and economic support to the student militia, it would result in total collapse of the Taliban.

Masood accused Pakistan of encouraging the Taliban to start military operations in Afghanistan. He also referred to the statement of the former Pakistani Interior Minister Naserullah Babar wherein he has admitted in imparting training to the student militia.

Commander Masood said that Islamabad wants to enhance its influence in the war-ravaged Afghanistan for its political and economic interests. But this kind of approach, he said, would not help end the continuous civil war in Afghanistan rather will add more fuel to the already existing fire.

He alleged that the Taliban have sown the seeds of hatred among different ethnic groups.

## Saudi Arabia froze relations with Taliban over Osama

# Saudi-Taliban relations deteriorate over Laden issue

News 981002

By Rahimullah Yusufzai

RIYADH (AFP) - A Saudi newspaper which reflects official opinion said on Wednesday that kingdom froze relations with the Taliban militia in Afghanistan over its support for Saudi dissident Osama bin Laden.

"Can we continue to accept the Taliban's position and to encourage them, even as they give asylum and protection and allow terrorists to proclaim their acts to the media?" the Okaz daily said.

"The kingdom can no longer accept the Taliban's procrastinations, nor the fact that they are avoiding their responsibilities by sheltering terrorists and criminals," the daily said.

It was the first comment from a Saudi newspaper on the issue since Riyadh expelled the Taliban's charge d'affaires from the kingdom on September 23 and recalled its own charge d'affaires from Kabul.

"We were surprised that they (the Taliban) opened their arms and welcomed bin Laden after his departure from Sudan. They allowed him to claim responsibility for terrorist acts," the newspaper said.

Bin Laden has been accused by the US State Department of being responsible for anti-US bombings in Saudi Arabia as well as last month's twin US embassy bombings in east Africa.

Five US soldiers were killed in a 1995 attack in Riyadh and another 19 died in June 1996 in a bombing at their barracks in Khobar, near the eastern city of Dhahran.

Saudi Arabia, Pakistan and the United Arab Emirates are the only countries to recognise the Taliban as the legitimate rulers of Afghanistan.

PESHAWAR: Relations between Saudi Arabia and the Taliban-led Afghan government have further deteriorated over the issue of Osama bin Laden and Saudi newspapers have started criticising the Taliban and their leader Mulla Mohammad Omar.

It was over a week ago that the Saudi government recalled its charge d'affaires from Kabul and asked his Afghan counterpart in Riyadh to leave the kingdom. Both the Saudi and Afghan authorities have made it clear that the dispute which poisoned their otherwise friendly relations was the continued presence of Saudi dissident Osama bin Laden in Afghanistan.

Afghan sources said the Saudis were also piqued when the Taliban supreme leader, Mulla Mohammad Omar, used strong language in a recent meeting with Saudi officials in Kandahar in southwestern Afghanistan. He reportedly told Saudi intelligence chief Prince Turki Al-Faisal and other Saudis accompanying him that the only issue they raised during their bilateral meetings was Bin Laden and nothing else.

He reportedly also said that the question of one person, ie Bin Laden, shouldn't be allowed to spoil Riyadh's ties with Kabul as the wanted Saudi Islamist leader had taken refuge in Afghanistan and had been disallowed

to pursue his political and military activities.

The sources said the Saudi delegation had come to Kandahar to demand that Bin Laden be handed over to it to face trial for his involvement in the bomb explosions in Saudi Arabia which killed about 19 American soldiers. Mulla Omar's refusal to do so angered the Saudis and prompted them to withdraw their charge d'affaires from Kabul and expel the Afghan charge d'affaires from Riyadh.

Earlier, another Saudi delegation led by Auqaf Minister Abdullah al-Turki had met Mulla Omar and other Taliban leaders in Kandahar and raised the issue of Bin Laden. According to Arabic newspaper, Al-Sharq Al-Awsat, which is owned by Saudi prince Salman, Mulla Omar in this meeting had promised to hand over Bin Laden to the Saudi government. The newspaper in a recent edition said Mulla Omar was a liar as he failed to fulfil his promise. This has annoyed the Taliban and their supporters, who feel Mulla Omar shouldn't have been referred to in such a derogatory manner as he was head of an Islamic government and had been chosen as Amirul Momineen (Commander of the Faithful). They also suspect that the campaign against the Taliban and Mulla Omar was being sponsored by the Saudi authorities.

The Okaz newspaper, which is

known as a semi-official Arabic daily of Saudi Arabia, also criticised the Taliban in one of its recent editions.

The Taliban, on their part, are denying that Mulla Omar made any promise to hand over Bin Laden to the Saudi government. They pointed out that it has been the consistent policy of the Taliban-led Afghan government that Bin Laden would not be handed over to the USA or any other country. However, he could be tried in Afghanistan according to the Shariah laws now enforced there once evidence was made available to the Afghan government.

It was also learnt that the Taliban were also not happy with the attitude of Salman al-Amri, the Saudi charge d'affaires in Kabul, who spent most of his time in Pakistan rather than in Afghanistan.

Meanwhile, it was learnt that the Saudis would only consider reconciliation with the Afghan government once the Taliban sent a delegation to Riyadh to seek forgiveness of the Saudi authorities for the harsh language used by Mulla Omar during his earlier meeting with Prince Turki al-Faisal in Kandahar. Until now, the Taliban have given no indication that they were contemplating such a move to appease the Saudis. It may be added that Saudi Arabia, Pakistan and the UAE are the only three countries in the world which have recognised the Taliban-led Afghan government.

## Taliban deny taking over Afghan refugee camp in Wana

News 981012

Bureau Report

PESHAWAR: The Taliban have denied that they took into their own hands in an Afghan refugees camp in Wana, South Waziristan agency, in Pakistan and termed news reports to this effect as misleading.

A Taliban spokesman in Wana told The News that it was the committee of elders in the Zarinoor camp near Wana rather than the Taliban which took action against an Afghan barber who had arranged a music concert at the wedding of his brother.

He said people at the wedding were indulging in immoral acts and the committee had to intervene to stop the un-Islamic and indecent actions. He said the local Taliban

also intervened to stop such practices and later apprehended two of the culprits and handed them over to the Pakistani authorities in Wana.

The Taliban spokesman conceded that some people fired in the air during the scuffle and grappled with the Taliban and the committee members. Sources in Wana said two Taliban and four other people sustained injuries during the scuffle.

He maintained that the committee in Zarinoor refugees camp comprised tribal and village elders and had been approved by the Pakistan government. He said the Taliban had no intention of interfering in Pakistan's affairs or extending their writ to parts of this country.

## Annan terms Afghan situation as grave

News 981004

NEW YORK: The UN Secretary General Kofi Annan has termed the situation in Afghanistan as very grave and warned that the Afghan crisis is turning into a regional conflict.

In a statement, read out at the OIC Foreign Ministers session in New York on Friday, he pointed out that if the international community adopts an indifferent attitude towards crisis in Afghanistan it may pose a serious threat to regional security and peace, radio Tehran reported.

He said that crisis in Afghanistan has escalated in the current weeks and Taliban have intensified their military operations in northern Afghanistan. Annan said that reports are coming about massacre of people after the fall of Mazar-e-Sharif and Bamyan in which many people have lost their lives besides Iranian diplomats and journalist and it is a cause of concern.

Referring to the recent conference of the six-plus-two countries in Afghanistan, Annan said there was no military solution to the Afghan prob-

lem. The UN Secretary General urged Taliban to respect international rules and regulations and to refrain from violation of women's rights.

Meanwhile Iranian Foreign Minister Kamal Kharrazi has asked for practical steps to be taken by the UN Security Council against the Taliban in Afghanistan.

Addressing the OIC Foreign Ministers session in New York Kharrazi referred to Taliban policies and violation of international rules and regulations by this group in Afghanistan and said that the massacre of Iranian diplomats and journalist in Mazar-e-Sharif has escalated tension in the region.

He claimed that the Taliban are a threat to peace and tranquility in the region. Kharrazi reiterated his demand for punishment of those responsible for the crime and has also demanded the release of Iranian prisoners. The Iranian Foreign Minister called for the establishment of a broad-based government in Afghanistan saying this is the only solution for the war-ravaged country.—NNI

## Afghan journalist survives life bid

FP 98004

F.P. Report

**PESHAWAR** - An Afghan journalist, Abdul Hafiz Hamid Azizi, Friday escaped attempt on his life in Peshawar.

According to details, two unidentified gunmen with Afghan features, riding on a motorbike Friday at 5.00 pm, opened fire at him when he was on way home in the Afghan Colony.

Upon the report, the Fafirabad Police registered the case and reportedly started investigation.

Currently Hamid Azizi is regularly contributed a column and articles to the bi-lingual Peshawar-based daily, Sahaar.

In the recent past, many well-known Afghan personalities like Hakim Katakazi, Dr. Loddin, Com. Fazal-i-Haq Mujahid, Qaom Rahbar, Faiz Muhammad and Gen. Raz Muhammad have become victims of such terrorist attacks.

When contacted, Azizi said that he had no enmity with any body, but recently he had received some anonymous threatening letters.

He was of the opinion that maybe some of his recent articles were not liked by someone and after sending him letters, they decided of teaching him a lesson.

## Several Afghan diplomats seek asylum

News 981006

Bureau Report

that and instead reached Holland to seek political asylum there.

Dr Rasool Talib, the representative of Karim Khalil's Hezb-i-Wahdat in Peshawar, has reportedly gone to the USA and applied for political asylum. He was said to be in possession of 800,000 dollars of party funds at the time of his departure for the USA.

Three more Taliban era diplomats have also sought political asylum in Western countries. They include Noorul Huda, who was acting Afghan ambassador in the UAE and has reached California, is search of political asylum in the USA, Mohammad Ahmad who was Afghan consul general in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia and is now in Sydney for want of political asylum in Australia, and Abdul Ahad Tarishi who was first secretary in the Afghan embassy in Kuwait and is now Germany seeking political asylum there.

**PESHAWAR:** Several diplomats and a minister in former Afghan president Burhanuddin Rabbani's cabinet have sought political asylum in Western countries.

According to the Peshawar-based Sahaar news agency, former Rabbani information and culture minister Siddiq Chakari has reached Australia and sought political asylum after living for years in Pakistan.

Shamsuddin Baos, first secretary in the Afghan embassy in Islamabad, has reached New Zealand via Malaysia. His application for political asylum is now being processed.

Abdul Qadir Alani, who was Rabbani's representative in Pakistan and ran the Jamiat-i-Islami Afghanistan office in Peshawar, had gone to Bonn, Germany to attend a gathering of Afghans about two months ago. He didn't return after

# Literati optimistic about future of Pakhto language under Taliban government

FP 981005 F.P. Report

**PESHAWAR** - Pakhtun writers, poets and intellectuals always considered Kabul and Peshawar as twin cities for the promotion of Pakhto language, literature and culture.

The writers across the Durand line and those of the Frontier, in the past, worked jointly for the uplift of pakhto literature.

The former Afghan governments, in their own capacities, used to hold seminars workshops and published several books and journals in pakhto language. Pakhto and Persian were both the official languages of Afghanistan.

Facts and figures of 1981 census show that in Afghanistan the percentage of Pakhto speaking community is about 64 percent, while here in Pakistan, Pakhto is the second largest speaking language with a percentage of 13.39.

The writers of Afghanistan are thinking about the future of pakhto language and literature in the present Taliban government.

According to a well-known writer and poet, Dr Sher Zaman Taizi, pakhto has been remained a revolutionary language.

History shows that pakhtuns and their language never changed in Mughal era, when Mughal king Akbar, tried to neglect pakhto language, Pir Rokhan reacted very strongly and launched a movement called Rokhan movement.

So from Mughal to the British pakhto language flourished due to the dynamic role of Pakhtun leaders.

While commenting on the future of pakhto language and culture in Afghanistan, he said that except Arabic, speaking of other languages are considered as a sin by Taliban militia.

However the future of pakhto language seems to be bright because of deteriorating relationship between Taliban and Iran. Now Taliban will work for the promotion of pakhto language instead of Persian.

The progressive writers and intellectuals who left Kabul and settled in European countries are very keen to work for the promotion of pakhto language. Even some of them financially support the writers and poets for publishing their books and other journals he added.

Taliban militia put a ban on Radio and Television in the country and Radio station is broadcasting the news and news commentaries.

The writers and poets also consider this ban a great loss to pakhto language and literature. However it is a good omen that presently, there are about sixteen radio stations through out the world which are broadcasting pakhto programs.

When a question about the future of pakhto language was put up before the director of Pakhto Academy, Dr Rajwali Khattak he replied that Taliban had not adopted any policy in black and white so far about the pakhto language but it was hoped that Taliban militia would make a better policy for the up lift pakhtun culture and literature.

A few days back delegation of writers was sent by Taliban militia who visited Pakhto Academy and held meeting with us. We discussed the matters at length.

The members of delegation assured that Taliban regime would do their best for the promotion of literature, he added.

## Afghan female journalist survives life attempt

FP 981007

By IMTIAZ HUSSAIN

**PESHAWAR** - A female Afghan journalist survived life attempt when two unidentified persons fired at her Monday night in the cantonment area of the provincial metropolis.

Najeeba Sara Bibi, presently affiliated with the BBC's Pashto Service, had been receiving threats for the last couple of months from certain quarters following which the firing incident occurred.

An FIR was registered at the West Cantt police station under Section 324 of the Pakistan Penal Code.

The local police directed her to remain indoors till the completion of investigation.

The lady claimed that both the attackers had beards and were black turbans on their heads.

The lady, who also remained associated with the Pashto daily 'Hewad', had received a number of letters, carrying the name and signature of Maulvi Muhammad Sarwar Mukhlis, chief of an intelligence agency of Afghanistan. Some of the letters also had the seal of the Afghan government.

In these letters, she was asked to abandon her activities and not to come out of her residence situated in Gulberg. Najeeba Sara is a widow and the sole bread-earner of her family.

Her husband, Muhammad Ismail Khan, was a professor at the Kabul University. He was hanged during the rule of Dabrak Karmal.

She was threatened for the first time some three months back when six persons stopped her on her way back home. They asked her to stop moving outside and give up her profession. She told The Frontier Post that she conveyed to them that there was no one to look after her family if she remained indoors.

After this incident, she received five letters, asking her to leave her profession and not to talk about women's rights. A few days back Najeeba Sara addressed a gathering in connection with the Afghan Independence Day during which she talking about the rights of the women after which she reportedly received some obnoxious phone calls.

# Heavy fighting rages north of Kabul

FP 981012

KABUL (AFP) - Heavy fighting was reported north of Kabul Sunday as independent sources confirmed that Taliban warplanes had launched a wave of raids at the apparent start of a long-awaited autumn offensive against remaining opposition troops.

Fighting was understood to be raging about 100 kilometres (60 miles) north of Kabul. Further casualties have been reported from a two-pronged Taliban attack launched Saturday but details remain sketchy.

"I can confirm the bombings, and the time is right for an offensive," one independent source told AFP.

Former Afghan defence minister Ahmad Shah Masood, now a leading opposition foe of the Taliban, previously claimed that cluster bomb attacks launched by the Taliban on civilian areas had claimed at least 10 lives.

Observers in Kabul said it was understood the Taliban had begun their well-flagged offensive, after weeks of speculation the militia

would make a pre-emptive strike against Masood.

A Taliban spokesman was unavailable for comment.

A Masood spokesman said the Taliban first targetted Ghorband on Masood's north west flank to put pressure on the strategic town of Jabalsiraj, about 77 kilometres (45 miles) north of Kabul.

However, one independent observer said Masood's forces are well entrenched at Ghorband with the surrounding areas guarded by high mountains, narrow river valleys and few roads.

A second Taliban strike was launched to the north of the Salang tunnel which passes through the Hindukush mountain range and links Kabul with northern Afghanistan, the opposition spokesman said.

However, he claimed the religious militia had "suffered serious casualties" and this had prompted three air raids against civilians in Charikar, the provincial capital of Parwan province, where Masood and his forces are based.

## Taliban enlisting Pak mercenaries'

KABUL (AFP) - The Taliban military machine has enlisted more Pakistani mercenaries in preparation for a major offensive against arch rival Mohammad Shar Masood, the anti-Taliban alliance said Tuesday. Alliance spokesman Mohammad Aref told AFP Masood's forces have adopted a defensive position and massed more troops and supplies in anticipation of a strike near their base in the Panjsher Valley. He said mercenaries from neighbouring Pakistan were now based in Ghorband and Khenjan to the north-west and north of Kabul after being ferried from provincial towns near Jalalabad in eastern Afghanistan. "More Pakistani soldiers have arrived through Kanur and Nangarhar at night time. Most of the Taliban's frontline soldiers are Pakistanis," Aref added. Pakistan has rejected previous speculation that it militarily supports the Taliban militia. Iran and Russia have rejected similar allegations that they have lent armed support to the anti-Taliban alliance. Taliban authorities have been gearing-up for a strike against Masood and are understood to have given the go-ahead to its military wing to launch a pre-emptive assault. "Masood has assembled 5,000 troops to mount an attack on Kabul but we want to assault his den before he moves against us," the Afghan Islamic Press quoted Taliban sources as saying on Monday. However, Aref said Masood's forces have adopted a defensive position and massed more troops and supplies in anticipation of a strike near their base in the Panjsher Valley. Masood and his 10,000-odd men remain the last major threat to Taliban ambitions of assuming total control of Afghanistan's disputed 30 provinces. They continue to shell Taliban frontlines, about 25 kilometres (15 miles) north of here from mountain-tops which cradle his base in the nearby Panjsher Valley. Kabul has been gripped by speculation that Masood would launch a pre-

News  
981007

winter offensive designed to win-back supply routes lost to the Taliban during its recent northern offensive. This includes the possibility of missile attacks on Kabul. His food and weapon supplies are dwindling and autumn has arrived, raising the prospect of a Masood-led offensive designed to re-establish supply routes before the winter snows set in. Observers say mid-October is the most likely time for a strike. However, Aref said Masood, and his faction of the Jamiat-i-Islami could afford to adopt a defensive stance. "We don't have any problem in getting our supplies, we have land routes through Badakhshan and through other means as well," he said. Last Wednesday, alliance defectors claimed Masood had bolstered his defences with three helicopters, acquired from Russia, while ammunition was regularly delivered from a base at Kulyah in Masood's native Tajikistan. Supplies landed at Bagram airbase, about 50 kilometres (35 miles) north of here, they told journalists. Regular supply runs were also carried out to the central town of Bamiyan and Mazar-i-Sharif in the north until both cities were overrun by the Taliban during their recent northern offensive. Mazar-i-Sharif fell to the Taliban on August 8 while Bamiyan was captured on September 13. The defectors said Masood now has three transport planes, six helicopters and one fighter plane and added that Bagram was now the only airbase being used by Masood. The Tajik commander and former Afghan defence minister has also been held responsible for the September 13-14 missile attacks on Kabul, killing more than 70 people and injuring a further 240. Masood has rejected the allegation.

## Islamabad rejects Taliban envoy's nomination

FP 981004 F.P. Report

PESHAWAR - Pakistan has refused to receive the new ambassador-designate of the Taliban government.

Maulvi Shahabuddin Dilawar was designated by the Taliban to replace the present Afghan ambassador in Islamabad, Saeedur Rahman Haqqani. Dilawar, who was the Afghan charge d'affaires in Riyadh until last week, came to the limelight when he was expelled by the Saudi government in a surprise diplomatic move.

Confirming Dilawar's rejection, a source said it was done to avoid offending Saudi Arabia.

Observers also said Pakistani authorities were weary of the frequent change of diplomats in Islamabad by Taliban.

The Pakistani decision has reportedly annoyed the Taliban leadership in Kandahar.

Dilawar, who was Afghanistan's Ambassador in Islamabad before being posted in Riyadh, has also served as the Afghan consul general in Peshawar.

# Taliban police harass German TV crew in Kandahar

News 981009

By Nasir Iqbal

ISLAMABAD: A director of the German television has accused the religious police of the Taliban in Afghanistan of manhandling him and his team and stopping them from taking films, depicting restoration of Afghan life to normalcy.

Paul Hampel, Director of the First German Television ARD, who had gone to Afghanistan on a valid visa issued by the Afghan embassy in Islamabad to film a documentary on reconstruction of houses and development in the Kandahar region, was manhandled and harassed by a force which according to him considers itself above the law.

"A new phenomenon called 'religious police' has emerged in Afghanistan which do not consider itself under the discipline of the Taliban rule — a government which has already enforced a strict Islamic code of Shariah."

"This force belongs to the intelligence services and considers itself beyond any law, have the right to enter any place without permission and can

arrest any one," Hampel narrated.

"As a journalist I know that the new government in Germany was not very pleased with the behaviour of Taliban and the situation I have been through," he said.

Hampel along with two Pakistani journalist went to Kandahar after getting permission from the provincial Governor Mulla Hassan to film reconstruction activity and present a contradiction to the world of the notion of war between the Taliban and Ahmed Shah Masud.

"Our intention was to show that contrary to war, there existed a peaceful society with people doing agriculture, building roads and electricity. We wanted to show normalcy of life there. That was why I made up to Kandahar through a valid visa but was surprised by the treatment meted out to them, he complained.

He said his team went to Afghanistan last week to produce a film about reconstruction of houses in Kandahar sponsored by the Afghan government and GAA, a German company. After lunch they were stopped by personnel of the Civil In-

terrogation Agency (CIA) from filming though they were at the UN Compound. They wanted to confiscate their equipment including cameras, tape recorders and were pressing to take them to their headquarters which they refused.

He further said that after sometime the police returned with 20 armed men and repeated the demand for taking them into custody. "They were informed that we were inside the UN compound — a protected space under the international memorandum — but they were never moved. The men forced their entry into our rooms and searched our luggage. Even they refused me making telephone calls," Hampel said.

The German national said that right from the beginning they behaved rudely with them and told his Pakistani colleagues in Urdu that they will beat them.

According to him, the policemen left after two to three hours but asked them not to leave the UN compound. The next morning some officials of the Afghan Foreign Ministry came to their rescue.



# Kabul women, children in dire need of medicines

News 981012

KABUL: Concealed in giant swaths of blue cloth, a woman steps out of the shadows and whispers in accented English. "I am an educator. Do you have a job for me, not in Kabul, in the provinces?" the rancid smell of an open sewer hangs heavy in the mid-afternoon heat and the bark of stray dogs makes the whisper barely audible.

Another woman outside a blue-tiled mosque eyes a foreigner, quickly she tucks her chin to her chest and stoops her shoulders trying it seems to bury herself deep inside her burqua. She steps forward her hand outstretched. "I'm not a beggar, but I have no choice. I need food for my family," says a voice from within.

In the beleaguered capital, ruled by Afghanistan's Taliban religious army, women have been on the receiving end of most of the militia's Islamic edicts.

Islamic edicts.

Women cannot work, girls do not go to school. Women are not allowed to leave their homes unless accompanied by a male relative.

Taxi drivers routinely are beaten if their fare is a woman alone. Devastated by relentless fighting between rival Islamic factions, aid workers say an estimated 30,000 widows are among the hardest hit by the Taliban's rigid rules regarding women.

Forced off the job in 1996 when the Taliban took control of Kabul some women have resorted to begging, others to sending their young children on to the street to scavenge and beg.

These so-called street children in Kabul, according to a survey by one aid group, is about 28,000. There are a lot of widows in Afghanistan who have lost their husbands, their bread

winners, in the war. These women have to do something for their survival," said Huma Saeed, a member of a small, but vocal Afghan Women's group called the Revolutionary Afghan Women's Association. Their members, like Saeed, are mostly in neighboring Pakistan. "They have lost the male members of their family and they themselves cannot have a job," says Saeed. "Begging is the only way." The Taliban defend their edicts in the name of Islam and remind its critics that the previous rulers of Kabul, led by ousted President Burhanuddin Rabbani, destroyed the city in four years of bitter factional fighting that killed 50,000 people, many of them women and children.

They say the streets were not safe from marauding bands of men who would steal and rape. But for women it seems the Taliban's harsh edicts is

taking a toll on their mental health.

At Kabul's only Mental Health Hospital, Dr Shaheen Shah Wasah, says since the Taliban takeover the number of women patients is on the increase. There is a small shabby ward. Even behind closed doors several women bury themselves in their burqa, lying listlessly on the bed.

Some moan and rock back and forth. Others squat in a corner.

Depression is their greatest enemy, says Wasah. "Some of them were students or teachers or worked in the government," he said. "Now she is in her home. She has no picnics. She can't go anywhere anymore. Of course it affects her brain." There have been reports, although not documented, that suicide among women in Afghanistan has increased dramatically in Kabul since the Taliban takeover.—AP

News 981013

## Afghan casualty figures show no signs of easing

KABUL: Casualties figures from Afghanistan's six years of bloody civil war show no signs of abating, according to a grim report card released by the Red Cross Monday.

For the first nine months of 1998, the number of families headed by a widow reached 97,842, the number of families headed by a disabled person was 63,246 and more than 43,500 people were treated for war wounds.

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) said local workers now produced 400 artificial limbs a month, 600 pairs of crutches and 700 wheelchairs.

In the nine months to September, 3,689 victims of land mines were registered, this compared with 4,965 in all of 1997, 4,027 in 1996 and 3,084 in the previous year.

Of the 26,309 amputees registered since the ICRC began operations in Afghanistan in 1987, 82 percent were victims of land mines and 70 percent of them were civilians.

Of the civilians, 82 percent were adult males, seven percent women, eight percent were boys under 14 years old and three percent were girls under 14 years of age.

The United Nations estimated more than 10 million land mines are scattered across Afghanistan.

The ICRC said direct assistance was provided to the most vulnerable people with families headed by widows or the disabled receiving food and non-food assistance such as agricultural and veterinarian aid.—AFP

# Afghanistan second biggest producer of opium: UNDP

By Wasim Iqbal Nation 981012

ISLAMABAD - Afghanistan has become a major producer of opium and manufacturer of heroin, the number two opium producer after the Golden Triangle. The United Nations Drug Control Program recently launched its fifth annual opium poppy survey 1998 which also indicates that poppy cultivation has again risen in Afghanistan and almost all production is in Taliban controlled areas.

Vast quantities of Afghan produced narcotics supply Pakistan with its large and growing addict population of several million. Central Asia, Europe, and increasingly the United States, an official of United Nations Drug Control Program (UNDCP) said.

The UNDCP report says that the 1997/98 growing season witnessed an expansion in opium poppy cultivation into several new districts. Some of these districts are within the existing opium poppy growing provinces, while other are in provinces where opium poppy cultivation has previously not been reported. However, it is noticeable that all are adjacent to existing opium poppy growing areas.

On September 10, 1997, the state high commission for drug control issued a declaration through the Taliban's ministry of foreign affairs that as

the use of heroin and hashish is not permitted in Islam, all should strictly refrain from growing, using and trading in hashish and heroin. Later, this declaration was amended by a clarification which specifically banned cultivation and trafficking of opium.

However, Taliban authorities have made it clear that the actual enforcement of the ban on opium cultivation will depend on farmers getting assistance from the international community to help them switch to alternative crops.

On June 1, 1998, Taliban authorities publicly destroyed two tones of wet opium in Jalalabad. This opium was collected from Laghman and Kama, areas that had grown opium poppy for the first time in 1998.

An estimated total of 63,674 hectares of opium poppy was cultivated in Afghanistan during the 1997/98 season. This represents an increase of approximately 9 per cent from the 1996/97 season. The largest increase were reported in the provinces of Baghlan, Qandahar and Nangarhar where cultivation increased by 184 per cent, 24 per cent and 22 per cent respectively. Whereas, the sharpest decline in opium poppy cultivation in 1998 was reported in Nimroz and Farah where cultivation fell by 98 per cent and 76 per cent respectively.

According to report Helmand retained its dominant position as the largest cultivator and producer of opium with almost half of total production. The provinces of Helmand and Nangarhar together account for approximately 72 per cent of the total opium poppy cultivated in Afghanistan in 1998.

During 1998, new areas of cultivation included Kama district in Nangarhar province, Azro district in Logar province, Sarobi district in Kabul province, Shahr-e-Bozorg district in Badakhshan province, Mehtarlam, Qarghai, Alishang and Alingar districts in Laghman province, Tagab district in Kapisa province, Asadabad district in Kunar province and Kalafgan district in Takhar province.

The report further reveals that an estimated 3,269 metric tons of opium was produced in Afghanistan in 1998. This meant an increase in opium production of approximately 16 per cent from the 1997 total of 2,804 metric tons. The total value of this production at framegate prices at harvest time was an estimated 105 million dollars.

An official at UNDCP said that the Taliban must implement its agreement with UN to end production and trafficking and not continue to put off efforts to deal with the problem.

## US aimed to 'hit' Osama in Afghan attack: Cohen

Nation 981014  
ESKAN VILLAGE, Saudi Arabia (AFP) - US Defence Secretary William Cohen said Tuesday the United States aimed to 'hit' Osama bin Laden in its August 20 missile strike on Afghanistan.

"We weren't quite successful as far as having the convention they had planned to hit as many as we wanted," Cohen said, referring to a meeting which Osama bin Laden held on the day of the strike. "But we sent a very strong message by going after his colleagues and himself," he told US troops in Eskin Village, a military base in the suburbs of the Saudi capital, on the last leg of a Gulf tour.

The message for Osama was: "If you are going to carry out terrorist operations against the US, there is no safe haven. We are going to come after you, whenever we find the right time... We will be there."

The strike on Afghanistan was carried out at the same time as US cruise missiles hit a pharmaceutical factory in Khartoum that the United States suspected was being used to produce ingredients for chemical weapons.

The two attacks were carried out in reprisal for the August 7 bombings of the US embassies in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam that killed nearly 260 people and left thousands wounded.

The United States accused Osama of ordering the bombings.

Aviation Week and Space Technology reported

# US should rethink Afghan policy

Shireen T. Hunter

Great powers with global interests often find themselves with strange bedfellows, and the US is no exception. But, none has been as embarrassing as the Taliban.

The Taliban preaches the most obscurantism, denies women the right to education and health care, applies the Islamic penal code with extreme harshness, considers other Muslim sects (such as the Shiites) heretics worthy of extermination.

Furthermore, all Central Asian countries, Russia and even US ally Turkey are worried about the impact of the Taliban's mastery of Afghanistan on regional security and politics. Why did the US close its eyes to Pakistani and Saudi efforts to promote the Taliban and do little to stop its march to power and seem to side with the Taliban in its dispute with Iran?

The US wants to secure the export of Central Asian energy resources to world markets and to contain Iran, and in both cases the Taliban has been seen as a useful instrument. Since January 1992, when Secretary of State James Baker visited Central Asia, the US has been determined to prevent Iran either from making significant inroads in the region or from becoming a transit route for Central Asia's energy exports and its link to the outside world.

But this strategy meant that the Central Asian countries would be dependent on Russia unless a southern oil pipeline was built that bypassed Iran. Pakistan is the only other neighbouring country with access to the sea, but reaching it means putting a pipeline through Afghanistan if Iran is to be avoided.

Thus, an Afghanistan stabilised under the Taliban and cooperating closely with Pakistan would provide the vital southern link. Moreover, setting up an Afghan government that was anti-Iran and anti-Shiite would tighten Iran's encirclement.

The flaw in this strategy has been a misreading of Afghan realities, the true nature of the Taliban, the concerns of Afghanistan's neighbours and the limits of Iran's patience in the face of threats posed to its security.

An Afghan government made up of only one ethnic group — the Pashtuns — with strong anti-Tajik tendencies and excessive sectarian bias cannot in the long run pacify Afghanistan. Therefore, rather than advancing US strategic and

economic goals in the region, such a government would hinder them.

A Taliban government could become a source of instability in Central Asia as it tries to export its brand of radical Islam. The Taliban can also create problems for Pakistan by exacerbating its sectarian tensions and strengthening its more reactionary Muslim forces.

A conflict between Iran and Afghanistan, in which the US directly or indirectly supported the Taliban, would only strengthen Iran's radicals, undermine President Mohammad Khatami, rekindle anti-American feelings and destroy prospects of US-Iranian rapprochement.

Moreover, an Iran-Afghan conflict could degenerate into a broad-

**A conflict between Iran and Afghanistan would only strengthen Iran's radicals, undermine Khatami, rekindle anti-American feelings and destroy prospects of US-Iranian rapprochement.**

er conflict in South Asia with uncertain consequences.

US acquiescence in the Taliban's actions would give credence to conspiratorial views in the Muslim world that the US wants to cause sectarian warfare among the Muslims and give Islam a bad name.

US inaction in the face of Taliban transgressions would erode American credibility as the champion of human rights. Yet, it is not too late for Washington to reconsider its Afghan policy. It should place its weight on the side of forming a broad-based and moderate Afghan government more in tune with Afghanistan's and regional realities and more likely to avoid an armed conflict with Iran. Such a policy would also best serve US strategic and economic interests, including the establishment of a viable southern outlet for Central Asia's energy resources.

The writer is director of Islamic studies at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, Washington

Los Angeles Times

# No Riyadh request for Osama's extradition

News 981015

RIYADH: Saudi Interior Minister Prince Nayef ibn Abdel Aziz on Wednesday said the freeze between Riyadh and the Taliban was not due to the Islamic militia's refusal to extradite Saudi dissident Osama bin Laden.

"The Saudi government did not ask the Taliban to hand over Osama bin Laden," the minister said, quoted by the local Al-Jazira daily.

"The breakdown in diplomatic relations with the Afghan movement was the result of certain actions," by the Taliban, the minister said without elaborating.

Talks on terrorism, including specific references to bin Laden, were held between US Defence Secretary William Cohen and Saudi Arabia's Defence Minister Prince Sultan bin Abdel Aziz on Tuesday.

Following the meeting, Pentagon spokesman Kenneth Bacon told reporters the talks covered bringing "bin Laden to justice, efforts by the Saudis, as well as our efforts to attack his terrorism network."

On Wednesday, Prince Nayef added: "The kingdom wishes Afghanistan well, but certain actions which should not have been carried out by the brothers in Afghanistan led to this."

Riyadh expelled the Taliban's

charge d'affaires from the kingdom on September 23 and recalled its own charge d'affaires from Kabul.

Wakil Ahmad Mutawakkil, a spokesman for the Taliban in Abu Dhabi, told AFP last week that "Saudi Arabia officially asked us, before the US raid (on Afghanistan), to hand over Osama bin Laden but we refused."

Last month, the Okaz daily said the kingdom froze relations with the Taliban over the support and asylum it was giving bin Laden.

Following the expulsion, a Riyadh-based diplomat told AFP that the kingdom had frozen relations to push for the extradition of suspects in a 1996 anti-US bombing who are hiding in Afghanistan.

The bomb attack in June 1996 killed 19 US soldiers at their barracks in Khobar, near the eastern city of Dhahran.

Bin Laden has been accused by the US State Department of being responsible for anti-US bombings in Saudi Arabia, including the Dhahran attack, as well as last month's twin US embassy bombings in east Africa.

Saudi Arabia, Pakistan and the United Arab Emirates are the only countries to recognise the Taliban as the legitimate rulers of Afghanistan. —AFP

## Iran for security belt around Afghanistan

News 981015

TEHERAN (DPA) - Iran wants the establishment of a security belt around Afghanistan, the official Iranian news agency IRNA reported Wednesday. IRNA quoted Iran's permanent United Nations representative in Geneva, Mohammad Amir-Khizi, as saying that the belt would be aimed at confronting threats to political and economic security in the region and halting drug trafficking.

The Iranian official said that since continuation of civil war in Afghanistan has paralysed the country's economy, the Taliban has resorted to production of drugs. Tensions remain between Iran and the ruling Taliban militia in Afghanistan after the killing of eight Iranian diplomats and one IRNA correspondent by the Taliban in the northern Afghan city of Mazar-e-Sharif on August 8.

## Explosion outside former Cuban embassy in Kabul

KABUL: A truck laden with explosives blew up outside the former Cuban embassy here early Tuesday, witnesses said.

They said the explosion destroyed an armoured personnel carrier parked at the main gate to the embassy.

Details remained sketchy and it was not known whether the explosion was an accident or a deliberate act of sabotage. Witnesses said there were no casualties. —AFP

News 981014



# More world donations for Afghans' rehabilitation

Nation 981015

From Our Correspondent

**PESHAWAR** - Despite unrealistic attitude of Taliban Islamic Movement towards the global community, various Western and European countries are taking interests in relief activities in Afghanistan.

A latest report of the United Nations on Afghanistan reveals that the Netherlands government has announced a donation of 2.5 million US dollars for health, sanitation and water supply projects in Afghanistan. The projects would be executed by International Committee of the Red Cross.

Similarly, the US has also donated 73,500 dollars for coordination and training to the Afghan NGO Coordination Bureau (ANCB) through UNOCHA. Likewise, the government of Germany has granted 50,000 American dollars for veterinary support to the Mine Dog Centre.

The report further states that this year, the United Nations Development Programme will mark Poverty Eradication Day by holding a meeting about the Afghanistan PEACE initiative

(Poverty Eradication and Community Empowerment). The meeting, which will be held in local languages, will take place at the UNDP/UNOCHA officers in Peshawar.

Following the workshops held in Islamabad early this month, five thematic papers have been circulated for comment to members of the donor community. At the same time, the UNDP/UNOCHA has sent copies of the new project to all heads of the UN agencies and NGO coordination bodies.

The reports state that the UN regrets that, until international staff members return to Afghanistan, its guest houses will remain closed. The organisation would also like to remind all travellers in Afghanistan that it can only extend "privileges and immunities" to people travelling on official UN business.

A WFP fields survey team began Vulnerability Assessment Mapping in Kabul last week. The two month survey aims to identify types of vulnerable household and quantify the assist-

ant needed. Particular attention will be focused on poor families including child/ female-headed households and IDP's. The survey is intended to assist WFP Afghanistan in targeting assistance, particularly in the light of the reassessment of bakery projects.

The survey team has also produced recommendations for assistance to the Hazarajat region. The recommendations concentrate on areas to be assisted, identification of household types who require assistance.

A UNDP Gender Consultation was held last week between all PEACE partners. The consultation enabled an exchange of information on gender programmes and strategies, and provided a realistic assessment of progress achieved, so far, and future steps to be taken. An output of the consultation was a decision to create a Gender Coordinating Unit (GCU), composed of gender focal points from UNDP, PEACE partners. An action plan of the unit will be outlined at the first GCU meeting, by the end of October.

## Ex-newscaster portrays miseries of educated women in Kabul under Taliban

News 981016

By Arshad Ayyub

**PESHAWAR:** "It was the wee hours of September 27, 1996 when Radio Kabul broke the news of the Taliban getting control of the city.

This announcement was followed by another one, more alarming, specially for womenfolk, restraining them from coming out of their homes and the performance of their duties," Mrs Habibi was saying, and after a moment's pause continued, "since that time life in Kabul has undergone a tremendous change with most of the natives deserting the city."

Mrs Habibi, who was a newscaster and announcer with Radio Kabul and who enjoyed great fame for her captivating voice, was recollecting her past, with her eyes glowing with enthusiasm. "Thrice I was declared the best announcer and newscaster," Mrs Habibi boastfully announced. But as she was commenting on the prevailing situation in her city, nostalgic and pensive she was looking and tension was visible on her face.

"When I go out shopping, I find myself among a mob of strangers," she said in a grief-stricken voice.

Mrs Habibi is only one character of the tragedy being enacted in the peaceful life of Kabul city since the time Kabul fell to Mujahideen in

1991. Persisting war that has afflicted the city and its surroundings since then has left devastating effects on the lives of the locals, many of whom have preferred to migrate to those places which could be secure from the continuous fears of rocket attacks and infighting among different armed groups. Although there is peace not only in Kabul but the whole of Afghanistan under the Taliban, the war-ravaged Kabul city presents the look of a ghost city with destroyed buildings, broken roads, child beggars in rags all around and a grief-stricken general population.

On asking as to what was her first reaction to this announcement regarding the ban on continuing her job, Mrs Habibi, while trying to hide the intensity of her feelings and reaction against the edict, only said, "I had no other option but to obey the directives."

To a query whether she along with other affected persons registered any protest with the government, she said, "in the beginning unlike other working women the salaries of those working in information ministry were stopped. Against this we protested and took the matter to Anur-ul-Mominin, who later on ordered the restoration of the same," she added.

Commenting on the problems faced by the Afghan women in the

present situation, she said that apparently there was no change in the lives of uneducated and household women and the situation is problematic only for the educated working women. "The situation has not brought anything new for common women but the educated and working ladies are exposed to many new challenges which they are quite unaccustomed to," remarked the lady, adding common women are only concerned about financial matters as their men and sons have no employment opportunities and the prices of daily use items are on the increase, making it difficult for them to make both ends meet.

Asked what irked her when she was regularly getting monthly salary, Mrs Habibi said in a prompt reply that money alone was not the problem and she along with other ladies was only concerned about her career. "We want to make the authorities realise that getting salaries is not the real issue. The problem is that skills, experiences and the technical know-how the women have would go down the drain if the same situation prevails," she added.

To a query she said some signs were visible to foresee a change in the headline policies of the Taliban militia. "At the very outset, they were staunchly opposed to women working in any field but some flexi-

bility is visible now as they have allowed the lady doctors to resume their duties, which is a very positive development," she said. She also showed a memorandum with the signatures of 12 professional women to be taken to Amir-ul-Mominin to apprise him of their hardships. She was hopeful when asked if she saw any prospects of improvement in the situation, "being a Muslim it is my belief that pessimism is sin and I am more than hopeful about the change," added Mrs Habibi.

When asked about any social activity in life, she said there was none, adding her children, two sons and a daughter all of them married were settled in foreign countries. "Life here is quite boring without any next of kin around. The only hobby, which is at the same time the necessity as well is cooking," she added.

Asked what made her stay back despite the sufferings and hardships, she observed a pause as if having no reply and then, her maiden gesture spoke the whole thing. She turned to her husband sitting nearby but keeping mum, which suggested he was not willing to leave Kabul. "I witnessed the rise of Kabul and now I want to be witness to its fall as well," replied Mr Habibi, one time governor of Kabul but now living a solitary life.

# The madrassa at Mulla Omar's Sangesar village

News 981014

By Rahimullah Yusufzai

**PESHAWAR:** Young Taliban in this picture are standing in front of the mosque and madrassa once run by Mulla Mohammad Omar, founder of the Taliban Islamic Movement, in Sangesar village near Kandahar in southwestern Afghanistan.

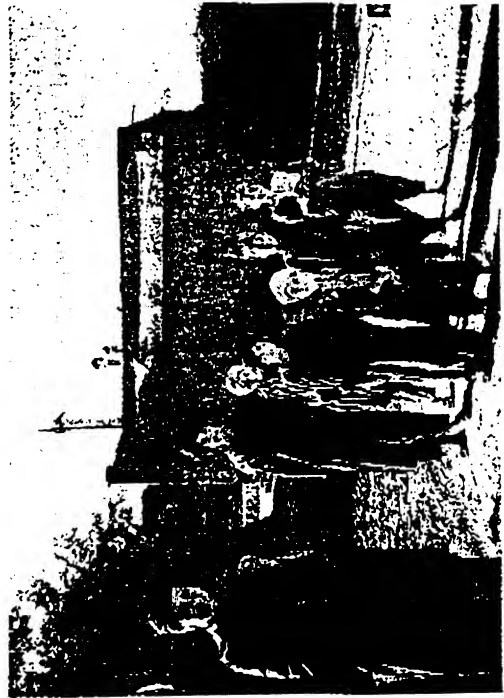
The mosque has now been rebuilt with money provided by a wealthy Sangesar villager. But the old madrassa and the hostel are largely intact, providing boarding, lodging and educational facilities to the 50-odd Taliban. The youngest are about eight years old and the oldest in their twenties. All feel proud of Mulla Omar and are staunch supporters of his movement.

The small, mud-built room where Mulla Omar studied and rested, is dark and dingy. Books and beddings are scattered in the locked room. The Taliban hostel rooms are also narrow and crowded and lit only by lantern. Poverty and deprivation writ large on the faces of the Taliban and their humble abode explains the circumstances in which they are brought up and educated.

Mulla Mohammad Hasan, a young, black-turbaned Talib introduced as head of the group, remembered coming to the madrassa as a small boy when three top Taliban leaders — Mulla Omar, Herat province Governor Mulla Abdul Ghani alias Mulla Bradar, and Mulla Yarana — were studying and teaching there. He recalled how Mulla Omar lost his right eye when a shrapnel from a rocket fired by the Russian troops hit him. He said Mulla Omar was a man of few words and spent hours studying the Holy Quran and religious literature in his room.

He also remembered Mulla Omar's dreams which prompted him to launch the Taliban movement. In one of his dreams, he saw a woman beseeching him to take up arms against those who had turned Afghanistan into a killing field where nobody's life and honour was safe. An old man who came into his dreams next promised him Allah's blessings if he took up the challenge.

The madrassa at Sangesar has the distinction of housing the first Taliban meeting and serving as the



Young Taliban standing in front of their supreme leader Mullah Muhammad Omar's madrassa in his village, Sangesar, in Kandahar. — The News photo

movement's nerve-centre in its early days in late 1994. Though the Taliban now control almost 95 per cent of Afghanistan's territory and have grown from strength to strength, many of them still return to Sangesar to find out about the place where it all started.

Though Mulla Omar has now shifted his family from Sangesar first to the outskirts of Kandahar and now to the city itself, villagers said he keeps returning to the village whenever he has the time. As in the recent past, it is quite a scene when Mulla Omar visits Sangesar in his

Landcruisers in the company of a horde of aides and bodyguards and these expensive vehicles have to be parked beside the mud-built houses and madrassa.

At the madrassa, the Taliban have grown vegetables and some fruit trees in a plot of land and their head teacher keeps two antelopes in the yard. The boys Taliban spent their day studying and praying and walking in the agricultural fields in the village.

Lush-green fields with maize crops and vineyards surround the madrassa and the village. As Mulla Hasan and a deaf and dumb man introduced as Mulla Omar's attendant explained, it was here in the serenity of Sangesar village that the founder of the Taliban Islamic Movement decided to realise his dream of waging "jihad" against the "topakyan" (mujahideen) and restoring peace and stability in Afghanistan.

The fact that he was now the most powerful man in Afghanistan has convinced the Sangesar Taliban and villagers that Mulla Omar was carrying and fulfilling a divine message.

## Kabul's poorest denied their daily bread

News 981022

**KABUL (AFP)** - Kabul's poorest have been denied their staple diet for three days after logistic problems halted subsidised flour deliveries by the World Food Programme to bakeries, residents told AFP Wednesday.

They said about 53,000 families are affected by the stoppage after the WFP faced a flour shortage in Pakistan.

A WFP official, requesting anonymity, confirmed distribution of cheap bread had been halted, saying flour had not reached Kabul on time due to a 'logistic problem'.

He said 228,257 people have been affected by delays which were caused by a flour shortage in Peshawar, Pakistan, where the WFP sources its stock for Afghanistan.

However, he said daily distribution would resume to each beneficiary on Thursday at a price of 500 Afghanis (1.5 US cents).

'The WFP does not have any plan to stop deliveries to the bakeries. It was only a logistic problem,' the official said, adding that a convoy of flour would shortly arrive in Kabul.

According to the official, the WFP provides 85 tonnes of flour to around 170 bakeries each day in Kabul to bake for 60,300 needy families.

Bread is Afghanistan's staple food. The market price of one qurs of bread at 160 grams each normally costs 2000 Afghanis.

Around 60 per cent of Kabul's one million residents are dependent in some way on foreign aid, due to 18 years of non-stop war.

The official also noted that 6000 tonnes of flour are needed to the WFP bakeries until end of the year.

## Status quo on UNSC seat for Afghanistan

**UNITED NATIONS (AFP)** - The UN credentials committee decided Tuesday to keep the status quo regarding the UN seats for Afghanistan and Cambodia, the committee chairman said.

Committee chairman Michael Powles of New Zealand told AFP after a short closed-door meeting that "there was no call for a decision" regarding Cambodia because the country's authorities did not submit an application for UN recognition.

Cambodia's UN seat is vacant, but Powles did not rule out a further meeting of the credentials committee during the current 53rd General Assembly session on that issue.

Cambodian leaders are attempting to reach agreement on a coalition government following July elections.

But asked to confirm statements from other committee delegates that the status quo would remain, he replied: "It looks as though that will be the likely outcome."

On Afghanistan, Powles said that the nine-nation committee was still putting together a formal statement regarding the seat.

# Masood claims 1,000 Taliban casualties

Nation 981023

DASHT-I-QALA, Afghanistan (AFP) - Afghan opposition commander Ahmad Shah Masood said Thursday his troops had killed or wounded 1,000 Taliban soldiers in the latest round of fighting.

In an interview here with AFP, Masood said his troops had seen off a series of Taliban attacks launched 10 days ago against their positions in the northeast of the country.

Masood, whose forces are now the only effective opposition to the Taliban, said his troops had also taken many Taliban prisoners. He declined to give figures for casualties among his own forces.

He said the Islamic militia's forces had retreated leaving behind "several hundred vehicles" of various types as well as many heavy ZU artillery pieces, and BM12 and BM21 rockets.

Independent sources in the region confirmed that Masood's figures of around 1,000 Taliban dead and injured were credible.

They said the fighting had been the most serious setback for the Taliban since a lightning summer offensive left them in control of around 80 per cent of the country — including the former opposition stronghold of Mazari-Sharif.

The opposition alliance forces loyal to ethnic Uzbek warlord Abdul Rashid Dostam and troops of the Hezb-i-Wahdat movement have been routed by the Taliban during their push in the north of the country.

Masood said fighting was still going on in the southwest of Takhar province and in the north of Baghlan province.

From Roshan Zamir

WASHINGTON—The Taliban are under no pressure from Pakistan or Saudi Arabia to extradite Saudi exile to the United States or anyone else, Kabul's special emissary Abdul Hakim Mujahid said here in an interview.

"We have

the most cordial relations with Saudi Arabia and very good relations with Pakistan," Mujahid said while talking to newsmen here. He said, "as far as bin Laden is concerned, it must be remembered that these two countries and the United States supported him for a long time when he played a major role in fighting the Soviets." Mujahid, who met assistant secretary of state Karl Inderfurth on Wednesday, rejected US demand for Laden extradition to the US where he will be tried on the charges of masterminding acts of terrorism against Americans in two African capitals, Nairobi and Dar-e-Salam. But he offered to examine the issue if the US provides "credible proof" of Laden's complicity in any terrorist act.

The Taliban ambassador offered to bring bin Laden's matter before a committee of Ulema in Afghanistan to evaluate the evidence. Inderfurth insisted that Laden be turned over to the United States for trial. Both sides decided to continue bilateral contacts to resolve this issue.

The meeting reportedly covered a variety of issues including recognition of Taliban as legitimate representative of Afghanistan.

No pressure on Taliban to extradite Osama

# Masood retakes Taloqan as rockets kill 3 in Kabul

Nation 981018

KABUL (AFP) - Opposition forces led by commander Ahmad Shah Masood Saturday said they struck at the Taliban militia, capturing the strategic Afghan town of Taloqan.

Meanwhile two separate rocket attacks left at least three people dead in Kabul.

Afghan sources and Masood spokesman, Mohammad Aref, told AFP that Taloqan in northeast Afghanistan near the Tajikistan border was recaptured from the Taliban overnight.

"That is true, we captured Taloqan overnight, the Taliban pulled out and started leaving the city last night. First we captured territory around the city then launched an attack on the city itself," Aref said.

The surprise fall of the provincial capital of Takhar came during a lull in the autumn offensive, launched by the puritanical Taliban across three frontlines a week ago.

Aref said about 250 Taliban troops were taken prisoner at Taloqan and militia casualties could reach into the hundreds. He said the number of casualties suffered by Masood's forces were very few.

The fighting started from three directions. First, we captured Dashti Archi and Shahrawan areas and then launched the attack on the city from the direction of Parkhar to the east," Aref said.

Taliban soldiers then withdrew to positions around Bagh, to the west of Taloqan, where heavy fighting was continuing, he said.

One observer said Taloqan held enormous strategic importance for Masood as the town controls access to much

needed supply routes. The ethnic Tajik commander lost the city during the militia's northern sweep in mid-August.

The Taliban claims Masood receives Russian and Iranian weapons and supplies through Tajikistan via its border near Taloqan, once a stronghold of former Afghan president Burhanuddin Rabbani.

Aref said the city fell due to "dissatisfaction" among the people with Taliban rule. "Also we wanted to have our supply routes open through Taloqan which has been our main base," he added.

He said the three frontlines — Takhar 70 kilometres north of Kabul, north of the Salang tunnel and in the adjacent Ghorband Valley — were relatively quiet after bitter fighting earlier this week.

Meanwhile, in Kabul a rocket landed in a residential area killing at least three, leaving four wounded and destroyed two houses in villages around Kabul airport. Two children were still missing.

Earlier another rocket landed inside the perimeter of the local airport but there were no reports of casualties.

Villagers said the rockets were fired from northern hill-tops controlled by Masood and appeared to be aimed at the airport where the Taliban have been ferrying supplies for its current offensive.

Six heavy rockets have exploded inside Kabul since Tuesday.

The Luna series rockets are loaded with shrapnel and capable of leaving a crater the size of a tennis court, and two metres (six feet) deep.

# Pakistan still hosts 1.4m Afghan refugees

Natou  
981015

ISLAMABAD (APP)—Pakistan still hosts 1.4 million Afghan refugees, providing them temporary protection, with voluntary return as the preferred option.

"Until the return of the refugees to Afghanistan, Pakistan hopes that the international community will share this burden with us," Secretary States and Frontier Regions Division Muhammad Abbas said. While addressing the 49th session of the Executive Committee of the UN High Commissioner's programme for refugees at Geneva, says a message received here on Wednesday.

Pakistan has hosted the single largest concentration of refugees in the world—about 3.2 million Afghan refugees at its peak, for more than a decade.

It is not necessary to recall the hospitality, generosity and tolerance displayed by the people of Pakistan in receiving and sustaining the millions of Afghan refugees over the last 18 years, he added.

He said Pakistan is grateful for the support extended by the international community to the Afghan refugees and for the services rendered by the personnel of the UN, the Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees, other humanitarian organisations as well as the NGOs. However, for the Afghan refugees in Pakistan, the largest donor

has always been Pakistan, he added.

He said "Pakistan, may not be a signatory to the 1951 Convention, but we adopted the most generous and open door policy towards the Afghan refugees. For the first two years of the refugee inflow, Pakistan bore the entire burden of the initial arrivals on its own.

Then commenced a generous inflow of humanitarian assistance. At the peak of the Afghan crisis when Pakistan hosted 3.2 million refugees, UNHCR provided assistance worth US dollars 55.6 million in 1980-1981 and the World Food Programme US dollars 160.9 in 1982.

Today when almost half of the refugees continue to live in Pakistan, this assistance has been drastically reduced. The World Food Programme's food assistance has been discontinued since October 1995 and so has the UNHCR's Care and Maintenance Programme.

The burden is completely on Pakistan. This has happened at a time when our own economy faces serious challenges, the impact of the cut off of wheat supply to refugees as of October, 1995 manifested itself in wheat shortages in the country which caused food riots in the beginning of 1997 as our wheat stocks dwindled.

The presence of the Afghan refugees has created many socio economic

problems in Pakistan, especially in Balochistan, and NWFP, the two provinces that host most of the refugees. The economic cost to Pakistan of hosting the Afghan refugees has been incalculable.

Despite their length of stay, Pakistan's treatment of Afghan Refugees has been exemplary—a fact acknowledged by the UNHCR. The international community cannot forget the plight of the Afghan refugees and the difficulties that we, as a developing country face, because of the continued presence of these refugees on our soil.

The donor community must not ignore the benevolent attitude of the Government of Pakistan towards the Afghan refugees, the refugees must continue to receive international assistance while they stay in Pakistan. There may be criticism of policies inside Afghanistan but this cannot be a reason for ignoring the legitimate needs of the Afghan refugees inside Pakistan.

We must register our concern at the deliberate policy to force the local integration of the 1.4 million refugees in Pakistan. Local integration cannot be enforced on us as a policy prescription. The numbers of refugees in Pakistan is too large and local tensions have increased to such a level that voluntary return is the only viable option for us".

FP 981026

## Afghan opposition gain ground

(Continued from Page 1)

then driven away in the direction of Mazar-i-Sharif, the opposition stronghold captured by the Taliban in August.

The United Nations and Amnesty International have accused the Taliban of murdering hundreds of ethnic Hazaras, men, women and children, after they captured Mazar-i-Sharif.

Villagers were concerned for the lives of the men taken from the valley, said Mahamat Aziz, 80, from the village of Sayad, whose 21-year-old son was among the hostages.

Saif Framer, 60, from the village of Deh Sala said his three sons were all taken, while another local, Mahamat Akhbar, 40, from Qasan said three nephews and two cousins were taken.

They asked commander Liqa to ask the Taliban to exchange the hostages for some of the Islamic militia captured during the opposition attack and for the bodies of Taliban killed in the fighting.

Liqa told the villagers while he favoured such an exchange he could not organize it himself.

"You have to ask the Red Cross. The International Red Cross must come here evaluate the situation and organize the exchange," he said.

The opposition claim to have killed between 400 and 500 Taliban and captured several hundred during the fighting, which ended Tuesday.

The area showed clear signs still of the hasty Taliban retreat with roads littered with abandoned or destroyed vehicles and equipment.

Two weeks ago, the Taliban launched a series of combined attacks against Masood in an attempt to capture the last parts of the country they still do not control.

The five-pronged offensive in the northeast, and against the Shomali plain north of Kabul failed, according to Masood who said the Taliban had lost more than 1,000 men.

The defeat brought to a shattering halt the series of successes the Taliban had enjoyed in the west and north since the summer.

# Taliban impose new code for non-Muslim Afghans

News 981023

KANDAHAR: Under a rigid new social code imposed by the Taliban Islamic militia, the nearly 50 Hindu families living in this southern Afghan city are required to wear a distinctive yellow piece of cloth.

Of an estimated 600 families who once thrived in Kandahar, most moved out during the past 20 years of turmoil.

Their forefathers had settled in Afghanistan in the 17th century when the central Asian Muslim country was ruled by Ahmed Shah Abdali.

Mostly of South Asian origin, non-Muslim minorities including Sikhs played vital role in commerce in Kandahar, once a thriving trade centre, which is now headquarters of the hardline militia.

Partab Chand, a 40-year old Afghani Hindu is desperate to meet his wife Shanti and six children who moved to India amid troubles in Afghanistan.

"I took them away to India because there was no future here," Chand told AFP. Chand, who sells milk-based sweets, said he had to come back because of his business.

The family remains divided because of difficulties in visa facilities as the Taliban administration is not recognised by New Delhi and India, still recognising the ousted Afghan government has closed its consulate in Kandahar, he said.

"I cannot go nor can I invite my

wife and children. But I miss my family," said Chand who has a shop in the city's busy Kabul Bazar, where most Hindus have businesses.

"This is my motherland but life here is too difficult," said Chand, who like other non-Muslims, speaks fluent Pushtu and holds an Afghani passport.

Mohan Lal, a 50-year old photographer, said, "We suffered the agonies of war like other Afghans. We saw deaths and destruction."

Lal, who said he has seen "both colourful and colourless" life in Afghanistan added that his business was down under the militia as the Taliban have banned taking photographs.

The Taliban only allow the taking of passport-size pictures for official purposes such as identity cards or obtaining travel documents.

"We are left with only a quarter of the usual business," Lal said.

After Kandahar fell to the Taliban four years ago, the Hindus were frequently intercepted by the religious police for not having beards as the hardline Islamic militia had banned the trimming of beards.

In an apparent bid to avoid confusion, the militia has enforced a new code for the non-Muslim community.

Two months ago the Taliban authorities asked Hindus to put a yellow coloured piece of cloth on their

shirts to differentiate them from the bearded and turbaned Muslims, community members said last week.

The Sikhs, who keep beards and wear turbans, escape any Taliban action because they also wear a steel bangle as part of their faith.

A Taliban official told AFP there was no restriction on non-Muslim minorities performing their religious duties.

"Hindus and Sikhs live freely here but of course they have to abide by the laws of the land," he added.

The Hindus are left with two temples while the Sikhs have one Gurdwara. Several of their worship places had been converted into residential quarters during the prolonged civil war in the country.

Community elder SL Birwani, a leading trader in dry fruits, said the minorities should adjust to the law of the land.

"Our women wear veils and cannot go to school like other Afghan girls," he said, referring to the restrictions imposed by the Taliban on the movement and conduct of women.

However, he said there were more troubles in the past, amid factional fighting after the fall of the communist regime in Afghanistan.

Nevertheless, Chand said: "I have dreams of seeing my daughters becoming qualified doctors or teachers and sons as engineers."—AFP



## Opposition forces capture two <sup>Nation</sup> 981027 Afghan districts

PESHAWAR (DPA) - Afghanistan's opposition forces claimed Thursday to have seized two districts in northwestern Faryab province.

The dominant Taliban militia denied a report by the Pakistan-based Afghan Islamic Press (AIP) that it had lost Darzab and Lawlash districts but it did confirm the loss of two strategic cities in the north and northeast.

AIP quoted anti-Taliban sources as saying that the forces loyal to key opposition commander Ahmed Shah Masood had captured Darzab and Lawlash from the Islamic militia which controls most of the country.

The Taliban admitted however that its militia had lost control of Taloqan, capital of the northern Takhar province, and the important town of Andarab in the northeast.

But the Taliban's Information Minister, Mulla Ameer Khan Muttaqi, said that militia was still in control of suburbs of Taloqan.

He also rejected claims of the anti-Taliban alliance that its forces had captured Dasht-e-Arch area in northern Kunduz province.

Muttaqi told AIP by telephone that Taliban forces had repulsed five attacks launched by Masood's forces over the week for the control of Dasht-e-Arch.

AIP said Taliban fighters mounted abortive offensives over the past two weeks to retake Andarab and Kotal-e-Khaawaak, north of Masood's headquarters in the Panjsher district.

Meanwhile, Muttaqi said that the Taliban had discovered several mass graves containing the remains of hundreds of militiamen allegedly killed by opposition forces in Dasht-e-Hairatan area in northern Balkh province.

The predominantly ethnic Pushtun militia and north-based opposition coalition, made up of mainly Persian-speaking minorities, often accuse each other of ethnic and sectarian killings.

## 25 per cent less poppy production in <sup>News</sup> 98029 Afghanistan

NEW YORK: The United Nations drug control agency has measured a 25 per cent drop in opium production in Afghanistan over the past year equivalent to decrease of upto 70 tons of heroin.

However, the group says the country remains the world's largest producer of opium poppy and spokesman Sando Touche credits the reduction to bad weather and not Taliban goodwill. He said the cultivated area has increased by nine per cent and has expanded to two new provinces and several new districts.

There are signs that the Taliban had not maintained their promise to the UN agency made last year in their official ban on cultivation and conception of intoxicating substances.

Earlier this month the Taliban offered to halt the cultivation of opium poppy, if world governments would recognise them as Afghanistan's legitimate rulers. Touche said the proper course would be for the Taliban leaders to first honour the opium ban and then the international community would take notice. — PPI

## RSF demands protection to Afghan <sup>Fg</sup> 981022 journalists facing death threat

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR - The Reporters Sans Frontiers (RSF), an independent organisation which works to defend press freedom worldwide, has expressed concern over the recent attempts on the lives of two Afghan journalists in Peshawar early this month.

Robert Menard, general secretary of the Paris-based organisation, in a letter addressed to Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, a copy of which was available to The Frontier Post Wednesday, called upon the government to initiate steps for the arrest and prosecution of those responsible for October 2 and October 6 attacks on Peshawar-based Afghan journalists Abdul Hafiz Hamid Azizi and Najeeda Sara Bibi respectively.

Hamid Azizi, the RSF said, was currently in hiding and had sent his family to live in another house. The journalist, whose only income is from his profession, is in a very bad financial situation after the October 2 attack on his life by unidentified gunmen at Afghan Colony, Peshawar, it added.

Similarly, the RSF general secretary informed the prime minister, that on October 6, Najeeda Sara Bibi, 35, a female Afghan journalist associated with the BBC Pushto Drama Project as a part-time re-

source person, was also fired at by unidentified men as she was going to a local market in Peshawar. She was not hurt.

Robert Menard said the journalist had received threats several times since she was stopped by six persons who asked her to give up her job three months ago. "A letter she received on September 25 was written on the letterhead of the Afghan interior ministry, while another letter dated October 4 was signed by Maulvi Muhammad Sarwar Mukhlis, reported to be the chief of the Taliban intelligence agency. Now she is under police protection," he added.

"Reporters Sans Frontiers is extremely worried by these two attempted murders. It seems that the Afghan exiled journalists living in northern Pakistan are prime targets for fundamentalists, in particular from the Taliban militia. Our organisation asks you to use your influence to ensure that those journalists are protected by the police if they are attacked or if they receive death threats. In the particular cases of Abdul Hafiz Hamid Azizi and Najeeda Sara Bibi, we call for those responsible for the shootings to be arrested and prosecuted," the letter concluded.

## Taliban lose another town as rocket hits Kabul <sup>News</sup> 981022

tured by the opposition in the valley fighting.

The opposition and independent sources said nearly 1,000 Taliban have been killed, wounded or captured in the fighting so far. The Taliban have also lost significant number of tanks, two helicopters and several trucks as well as other equipment.

While observers said the gains were important for Masud, providing a morale booster for his troops who have been on the defensive since the summer, they were not enough to significantly shift the military balance which remains in favour of the Taliban.

Meanwhile, a rocket fired by the opposition Northern Alliance hit the combined military and civilian airport in the beleaguered capital Kabul on Wednesday, said witnesses. There were no immediate reports of damages or casualties.

The attack came as dozens of Taliban aircraft took off from the airport apparently headed toward opposition positions north of the capital and in northern Takhar province, where the Taliban are trying to retake the provincial capital of Taloqan. —AFP/AP

DASHT-E-QALA: Troops belonging to anti-Taliban commander Ahmad Shah Masud have captured the strategic town of Andarab in northern Afghanistan after heavy fighting, opposition sources said here Wednesday.

The sources said the town fell Tuesday and Taliban forces have been pushed further back in the Kherjan region of Takhar province in fighting which continued Wednesday. No independent confirmation of the capture was immediately available.

The fighting at Andarab has left several dozen Taliban dead, while opposition losses were "light," the sources said, but refused to give details. The new attacks by Masud are important as they remove the threat posed by the Taliban to the Panjshir Valley. They also present another setback to the Taliban at the hands of Masud. On Saturday his troops had recaptured the strategic northeastern town of Taloqan.

The opposition spokesman claimed 100 Taliban soldiers were killed, 60 bodies still lying on the ground, and three battle tanks, 30 vehicles and four heavy guns were captured.

# Taliban's rivals mount attack on Khenjan

Fp 981024

(Continued from Page 1)

'We are not expecting strong Taliban resistance in Khenjan,' said military commander Qadem Sha, a doctor who has spent 10 years at the side of Masood, the defense minister of the government of former president Burhanuddin Rabbani which was ousted by the Taliban in September 1996.

Another opposition leader, Commander Hadji Liqa, said that around 80 Taliban fighters had been killed in the battle for Baiga, and that opposition troops were now digging into their positions around Khenjan during a lull in the fighting.

'Their positions at Khenjan are weak and we think we can overrun the town quite easily,' he added.

The major offensive launched by the troops of Masood N the last opposition leader still fighting the Islamic militia N culminated Tuesday with a Taliban defeat in Andarab, a few kilometers to the east of Khenjan.

The Taliban lost nearly 500 men and a large quantity of military vehicles and hardware during the battle, forcing the religious militia to retreat from Andarab valley which is now controlled by Masood's forces.

The valley is an important strategic area as it leads to Panjshir Valley, the stronghold of Masood.

The victory followed the seizure of the town of Taloqan by the opposition last weekend.

Residents in Taloqan told AFP Friday the Taliban rounded up a number of civilians in the town before fleeing the advancing opposition troops.

Raids were carried out over several weeks in

the capital of Takhar province, which the Taliban first seized two months ago during a lightning offensive that captured vast swathes of the north of the country.

'They arrested a lot of people, especially officials, educated people and among the families of opposition fighters,' said an ethnic Tajik source, speaking on condition of anonymity.

'Most of the ordinary people were left alone. For them, rule by the Taliban's Islamic law did not change much.'

The Taliban's arrival did not cause much hostility, the source added.

The Taliban has launched a series of military offensives in the past two weeks against the remaining regions of the country that still elude the militia's control.

The five-pronged assault in northeastern Afghanistan against the opposition and in the Shomali plains north of Kabul has been repulsed, Masood told AFP on Thursday, adding that the Taliban has lost more than 1,000 men in the clashes.

The Taliban now controls more than 80 percent of Afghanistan following a series of military successes in the west and north of the country last summer.

The Islamic militia routed the forces of ethnic Uzbek general Abdul Rashid Dostam in August and the pro-Iranian Hezb-i-Wahdat forces in September.

The elimination of the two coalition forces have left only Rabbani's Jamiat-i-Islami movement and Masood's troops as the remaining opposition to the Taliban.

## Taliban slam organisers over beard controversy

ISLAMABAD (NNI) - The Taliban government in Afghanistan has sharply reacted to the ban on three Afghan boxers from an international tournament in Pakistan last week on the grounds that they wore beards.

The head of Taliban Olympic Committee, Mullah Mutmaen termed the decision unjustified and complained that the organizers failed to inform them about the rigid rules that barred bearded boxers. He, however, made it clear that the people of Afghanistan were proud to have beard which was a must under the Islamic Shariah for all men.

The three light weight and middle weight Afghan boxers are on their way back home from Karachi along with their months of practice and the dashed hopes of winning a medal.

Taliban have imposed very strict Islamic laws in areas under their control. They have even flogged and punished those Afghans who have trimmed their beards. Taliban mobile teams in Kabul and other Afghan provinces are frequently warning the people to strictly abide by the Islamic injunctions and Shariah laws. Their hard line approach could be gauged from the fact that they have even banned the people from giving a big hand or applause to any sports events.

Fp 981028

Such strict interpretation of Islam has resulted in sharp decline in sports activities in the war-ravaged Afghanistan. The football and other sports stadiums in the country are now used as a venue for public punishment. The Kabul City sports stadium has recently witnessed thrilling events where a number of murderers were executed and hands of thieves amputated in public.

Officials supervising the boxing events said they were forced to ban the Afghan boxers as the International Amateur Boxing Association (IABA) rules prevent any competitor with a beard entering the ring. Because the referee might not be able to see bad cuts from blows to the chin.

The three Afghans, however, refused to shave off their beard fearing strict punishment from their government in Afghanistan. While it was a dilemma for the boxers it has also become a moot point for the Taliban sports authorities. Mullah Mutmaen said there was no question of Afghan competitors shaving of their beards. But he said he wanted to know in advance the ruling in other countries.

Afghanistan has been invited to take part in the Asian Games in Thailand in December. But Mullah Mutmaen says he still does not know bearded boxers would be allowed to take part. Most boxers had hair on top of their heads and therefore, why shouldn't they have beards as well, he argues.

## Taliban ask for evidence of charges against Osama

Nation 981027

KABUL (AFP) - The Taliban has asked Afghans to provide any evidence they may have of allegations against wanted Saudi dissident Osama bin Laden, the official radio reported Monday.

A brief statement by Taliban's supreme leader Mullah Mohammad Omar, carried by the radio, requested that people report to the Islamic militia's Supreme Court any evidence in their possession against bin Laden.

The statement did not say whether Afghans living outside the country would also be eligible to provide such information.

'Anyone who has got evidence on allegations against Osama bin Laden should hand it over to the chief justice and President of the supreme court Mawlawi Noor Mohammad Saqeb', the statement said.

Omar said the information would help the Taliban authorities decide whether bin Laden had been involved in international terrorism in line with Islamic Sharia law.

The Sharia forms the basis for the Taliban administration's external and

internal policies, he said.

The statement coincided with a current visit to Pakistan by Saudi Crown Prince Abdallah ibn Abdul Aziz.

Osama bin Laden, who comes from a wealthy Saudi family of construction tycoons, is wanted by both Saudi Arabia and the United States.

He is suspected of masterminding of a bomb attack at a US military base in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia, as well as August's twin deadly bombings in Kenya and Tanzania which killed more than 250 people.

Saudi Arabia froze its diplomatic ties with Kabul last month, reportedly over the Taliban's refusal to extradite bin Laden, whose alleged terrorist camps in Afghanistan were targeted by a US cruise missile attack in August.

The Taliban has said it would not hand over 'a guest of the Afghan people' to anybody under pressure.

They have, however, expressed their willingness to try the dissident Saudi billionaire inside Afghanistan if there is evidence to prove the allegations against him.



News  
981028

# New Shia group emerges in Afghanistan

By Behroz Khan

PESHAWAR: The formation of the new Shia group, National Independent Federation, indicates that the Iran-backed Hezb-i-Wahdat is losing its credibility as an umbrella organisation to hold together different factions of the ethnic Hazara minority in Afghanistan.

Though spare work for launching the new party was in progress since long, the fall of Mazar-i-Sharif and the Shia-dominated Bamiyan province to Taliban provided the opportunity to Shahidi Halmas to bring the Peshawar-based "Fadrasewn Azad-i-Milli" to the fore. Sources told The News that Iranian authorities were not happy with the past activities of Shahidi and his colleagues because of their strong ethnic bonds as Hazaras rather than looking forward to Iran in a religious perspective.

The splinter group of Hezb-i-Wah-

dat is constituted mainly of Shia leaders affiliated with the former communist regime and a good number of them belong to Hezb-i-Nasr and educated Afghans from Nasir Khusro Cultural Association headed by Ismaili spiritual leader, Gen Mansoor Nadiri. Their main stress, the source said, was to strengthen ethnic ties among the Shia and Ismaili minorities and give them a political platform now that the military might of Hezb-i-Wahdat to a great extent has been decimated.

The differences between Iran and the leadership of the group widened after late Abdul Ali Mazari shifted to Kabul in 1992 and tried to introduce a new concept called Millat Gharb-i-Kabul. The aims and objectives of formation and future policy of NIF are yet to come to the open to ascertain whether its plans are to demand an independent home for the ethnic Hazaras or struggle for their rights within Afghanistan.

## Gen Malik joins hands with Masood

By AIMAL KHAN

PESHAWAR - The Uzbek warlord General Abdul Malik has reached Panjshir valley, a strong hold of Ahimad Shah Masood, to join opposition forces against the Taliban.

Unconfirmed reports, pouring in from across the border, Wednesday said General Malik, who took refuge in Iran after his unsuccessful revolt against General Abdul Rashid Dostum, joined Masood-led opposition forces resisting Taliban's complete take-over of the war-ravaged country.

Earlier, the Turkish and Iranian officials had reportedly tried their best to reconcile friend-turned-foes Gen Dostum and Gen Malik, but these efforts failed.

Malik is currently under tremendous pressure from one of key regional actors in Afghan imbroglio to start military activities against the student militia, said an Afghan observer.

Both Dostum and Malik, who were until recently living in exile in Turkey and Iran respectively, are desperate to regain their lost position in Afghan politics, added the observer.

As compared to Dostum, who still enjoys support of regional actors like Uzbekistan, Turkey and other powers, Malik lacks foreign support, the analyst said.

With the support of Malik, Masood's forces recently made some military gains in Faryab province, the reports suggested.

Meanwhile, complete calm prevailed on the war fronts in

Afghanistan and the week-long ceasefire was holding.

Mullah Abdul Hae Mutmaen, in-charge of information department at Taliban's headquarters in Kandahar, told The Frontier Post by telephone that talks were underway with opposition to chalk out modalities for the exchange of POWs.

Confirming the ceasefire between the Taliban and the opposition, Mutmaen said that preliminary ceasefire was a pre-condition to the exchange of POWs.

## Taliban officials flogged for bribery, forgery

Natoun 981031

KABUL (AFP) - Three Taliban officials were publicly flogged here Friday for accepting bribes and committing forgery, witnesses said.

The lashes were administered at the football ground in Kabul's main stadium, packed by thousands of people after a Taliban military court found them guilty. Taliban officials said the culprits would also undergo six months imprisonment.

They said Mawlawi Sherajan, chief of the Islamic militia's intelligence department, was awarded 37 lashes for taking 30 million afghanis (845

dollars) from a local resident.

A Taliban court official Mir Qasem, accused of accepting 800,000 Afghanis (22 dollars) in bribes also received 37 lashes. The third offender was Qari Abdul Wudood, chief auditor in the ministry of fostering virtue and suppressing vice.

He was convicted of forging the signatures of the Taliban's defence minister to draw several millions afghanis out of the state treasury, they said. This is the first time the Taliban authorities have punished their own officials for corruption, observers here said.

FP 981102

## Iran to keep troops on Afghan border

TEHRAN (AFP) - Iran will maintain troops on its border with Afghanistan after the end of the massive military exercises beginning on Monday, army commander General Ali Shahbazi said Sunday.

Shahbazi, speaking in Zabol in southeastern Sistan-Baluchestan province on the eve of the launch of the maneuvers, said "part" of the some 200,000 troops dispatched to the border will stay there to fight "bandits, drug traffickers and smugglers of various goods."

"It has been decided that Iranian armed forces will cooperate with Pakistani border guards to maintain security, fight drug traffickers and armed bandits," he said, quoted by the official Iranian news agency IRNA.

Almost all of the drugs flowing into Iran originate from Pakistan and Afghanistan -- Iran's eastern neighbors.

Shahbazi said drug traffickers and other smugglers had diverted their operations to the southern part of Sistan-Baluchestan, which lies on the Oman Sea.

"The maneuver in itself is not so important. A bigger goal is to establish security in the region," he said, adding that radars and other hi-tech devices had been deployed in the area for the purpose.

The Zolfagar-2 war games will cover an area of 50,000 square kilometers (20,000 square miles) from Zabol, north of Sistan-Baluchestan, to the northern tip of Iran's border with Afghanistan in Khorasan province.

## Hundreds of fresh Afghan refugees arrive in Chitral

News 981105

By our correspondent

CHITRAL: Hundreds of new Afghan refugees have arrived in Chitral and many of them have been leaving down-country due to harsh economic realities in northern Afghanistan.

The arrival of the refugees gained momentum during the last week of October as there was shortage of essential commodities after the Taliban's capture of different strategic towns. The ensuing winter is also a major contributor.

A group of six refugees from Kunduz told this correspondent that people of many areas were facing starvation and many of them would die if immediate relief was not made available to them.

FP 981102

## US vows to continue demining Afghanistan

ISLAMABAD (APP) — US Assistant Secretary of State for South Asian Affairs, Karl Inderfurth has said that the United States would continue to provide its assistance to Afghanistan for demining.

Inderfurth and mines expert in the US State Department, Donald Peterno answered the questions asked by the heads of four Afghan Non-governmental demining organisations in an interview with World net television network, VOA reported.

Inderfurth and Peterno threw light on the efforts being made by the United States on international level for mines sweeping.

Commenting on the mines issue in Afghanistan, Inderfurth said it is the fact that Afghanistan is faced with the biggest threat and problem of mines.

Inderfurth expressed the hope that not only Taliban but other groups as well would give up using mines in Afghanistan because the war-torn country has experienced great hardships and difficulties as a

result of prolonged war and mines.

He lauded the efforts of the non-governmental organisations for mines sweeping in Afghanistan and said that the US wants to benefit from mines experience of Afghanistan in other countries.

He said that mines claim 26,000 lives the world over every year and added that 60 to 70 million mines are still existed in the world.

Inderfurth said that the US has not signed Ottawa agreement on mines but has joined international demining efforts and allocated almost 100 million dollars for mines affairs.

The mines expert in the US State Department, Donald said that America has provided almost 19 million dollars worth assistance to Afghanistan in mines sweeping since 1993.

Afghanistan, he said, is among those countries which has received more funds and assistance from the US in mines field.

He hoped that the assistance would continue in the future as well.

## Najibullah's cousin shot dead

News

981103 Bureau Report

PESHAWAR: A first cousin of the former Afghan President Dr Najibullah was gunned down in Peshawar Monday by unidentified assassins.

Mohammad Hashim Paktianee, who also happened to be Dr Najib's brother-in-law, was found dead near his residence in the posh Hayatabad township in the outskirts of Peshawar city. The body was found around 6 in the evening, police sources told The News.

Dr Najib was the last communist president of Afghanistan and killed by the Taliban when it overtook Kabul in September, 1996.

Sources in Police said he received one bullet in his head which proved fatal. He is believed to have died on the spot. No autopsy was performed till the filing of this report.

It was learnt that a case was filed against the unidentified assassins late Monday night.

Family sources said Paktianee was about to leave for Sweden within a few days. One of his two wives are living in Europe.

Sources close to Paktianee's family said he had received threats after arranging a Qur'an Khwani in September to observe the third death anniversary of Dr Najib. The sources, however, were unaware as to who gave him threats. Afghan sources said he was also planning to record memories of Dr Najibullah.

FP 981121

## Taliban order students to grow beard

PESHAWAR (NNI) - The Taliban administration has declared beard and turban mandatory for the students of Kabul university, says a report in Pushto daily on Friday. Quoting the Vice Chancellor of Kabul University, the paper said the clean shaven students and those not wearing turban would have to face physical and monetary punishments. The vice chancellor said that a student without turban would face seven lashes while the clean shaven would remain in jail unless his beard grows in accordance with the Shariah.

# Afghan warring groups asked to respect human rights

News 981103

By Behroz Khan

PESHAWAR: The National Commission of Human Rights of Afghanistan Monday called upon all the warring groups to respect human rights and appealed Taliban to lift restrictions on female education and jobs in light with the Islamic teachings.

The demand was made at the one-day seminar on human rights violation in Afghanistan from King Zahir Shah till date which was organised by NCHRA. Known Afghan and Pakistani intellectuals including chairman of the commission, Abdul Jabbar Sabit, Nancy Dupri, Prof Rasul Amin, chairman Human Rights Commission of Pakistan NWFP, Afrasiab Khattak, president Afghan Millat Party, Anwaar-ul-Haq Ahadi, Engineer Qutbuddin Hilal, Abdul Baqi Khalid, Fida Muhammad Fayeze, Miss Fakhr, Abdul Ghafar, Alhaaj Saranwal and others.

Through a number of resolutions, the commission demanded that warring factions not target residential areas and respect human rights while treating Prisoners of War (POWs). Taliban Islamic Movement was asked to start female education and allow women to resume jobs in the areas under the control of the Islamic militia. United Nations, all the foreign NGOs and national organisations working in this field should join hands to protect human rights in Afghanistan.

The commission demanded United Nations to probe and punish those Afghan war lords involved in war crimes and responsible for the killings of tens of thousands of people during the Russian-Communist era. UN should also bring the facts about the mass killing of Taliban soldiers by the opposition in Mazar-i-Sharif and the alleged revenge killing by Taliban after the fall of the city to them and asked the world body to play an active role instead of a mere spectator to the happenings in the war-ravaged country.

"We may have reservations about the restrictions imposed by Taliban on women however, the over all human rights situation has improved in areas under their control," said Abdul Jabbar Sabit. Every ruler of Afghanistan, he said has trampled human rights by subjecting political opponents to third degree methods. Sabit said to start with, is the extra-judicial execution of Abdul Khaliq and his family members for killing King Nadir Khan, father of Zahir Shah. "Khaliq's eyes were gouged, his ears and nose chopped and stabbed to death to revenge the killing of Nadir Khan," said Sabit.

A new reign of terror was let loose by Sardar Daud after overthrowing King Zahir Shah in 1973 by arresting, torturing, hanging and sending hundreds of intellectuals and progressive Afghans behind the bars. Daud abolished the constitution and dissolved the parliament to mark the beginning of dictatorship by depriving people of their political rights and so he was rightly called an "insane" Sardar. Among the prominent Afghans who were tortured to death was former prime minister Muhammad Hashim Miwandwal.

The high calibre intellectual Afghan was charged under the conspiracy that he was staging a coup along with a number of army generals, government ministers and members parliament. Miwandwal died in police custody due to severe torture while majority of the arrested Afghans during this era were later killed by the communists after taking over power from Sardar Daud in 1978. General Khan Muhammad, Col Zarghoun Shah and others were summarily tried, sentenced to death and executed.

The communists coming into power, Sabit said abrogated Daud's constitution and all the other laws which they believed were in conformity with the spirits of Saur revolution. Free hand was given to the newly-established state security police in dealing with the presumed anti-revolutionary elements including professors of Kabul University, former prime minister Musa Shafiq, ministers and almost all the justices of the supreme court. The Pul-i-Charkhi jail of Kabul, he said was by no means less horrible a place than the Nazi concentration camps established for the extermination of Jews.

The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan brought a black era, the country had ever witnessed. Convicted criminals were set free to make room in the existing jails to accommodate those who were arrested for their opposition to the revolution. The jailed Afghans had to be hanged and buried in mass graves by the Russian-Communists rulers without any trial just because to detain and punish more opponents of the government. The list released by Hafizullah Amin shows that 35,000 people were killed only in Kabul during Noor Muhammad Taraki era. Hardly any village or city elsewhere in Afghanistan escaped shelling or bombing by Babrak Karmal backed by his Russian masters, he claimed.

The era of Dr Najibullah was not different from his predecessors. But the four years rule of mujahideen, Sabit said was worst than all as far as human rights violation was concerned. The whole country was divided into areas controlled by various mu-

jahideen groups indulging in worst form of man slaughtering and human rights abuses.

Prof Rasul Amin said the responsibility for the destruction of Afghanistan rest only with Afghans as the few individuals tried to impose their own set of ideology on the people. "Nothing has changed in Afghanistan even today. The bad days of Afghans are yet to end," said the Afghan intellectual and head of Writers Union of Free Afghanistan. The Afghans crisis, Amin said should be solved through political means.

Qutbuddin Hilal said, "there is no justification of the continued genocide after the fall of communist regime in Kabul" and added the struggle for power and killings of the innocent people was against Islamic teachings. "We need to extinguish the flames instead of fanning the fire," said Hilal. Fida Muhammad Fayeze and Abdul Ghafar, who remained in jail during the communist regime narrated horrible tales of physical and mental torture during their incarceration.

Afrasiab Khattak in his winding remarks appreciated the formation of the commission to expose human rights violation in Afghanistan. He said human rights violation were reported everywhere in the world but Afghanistan, he said needs special attention due to its multi-ethnic society.

# Taliban's Achilles' heel

Once again the Taliban have suffered reverses in areas in Northern Afghanistan where the population is overwhelmingly non-Pashtoon. Both in Takhar and in parts of Baghlan provinces, the local population, which is largely Tajik, rose against the Taliban and paved the way for former defence minister Ahmad Shah Massoud's Tajik forces to retake these places. These developments once again brought home the point that Afghanistan's warlords have increasingly turned the ongoing struggle for power into an ethnic and linguistic war.

Despite their claims that they don't believe in ethnic and linguistic identity and are true and plain Muslims, the Taliban have not been able to shed off the image of a movement that is primarily Pashtoon and Sunni. Taliban's leadership, by and large, believes that most Afghans would eventually see through this game and refuse to side with those who fan parochialism for political motives. However in private, the Taliban leaders admit that opposition to their rule is strongest in non-Pashtoon areas and it is primarily due to the fact that their movement was launched from the Pashtoon heartland of Kandahar and is led by a Pashtoon, Mulla Mohammad Omar.

The Taliban Islamic Movement has consciously tried to induce as many non-Pashtoons as possible into its top leadership and also in positions of authority as governors, ministers, military commanders and department heads. Many Tajiks, Uzbeks and Turkmen, all presently governors of different provinces or ministers. Care was taken while appointing governors in Northern Afghanistan as non-Pashtoons were likely to be more acceptable there compared to Pashtoons.

This Mulla Ziauddin, a Tajik from Samangan province, and Mulla Abdul Mannan Niaz, a Pashtoon who comes from Herat, mother with Persian his mother tongue, was appointed governor of Balkh province with his headquarters in Mazar-i-Sharif.

However, the anti-Taliban forces and many others don't think they have done enough to make themselves acceptable to non-Pashtoon Afghans. Everybody knows that the leadership of the Taliban Islamic Movement remains firmly in the hands of Pashtoons. The movement, also known as the strongest support from the Pashtoon tribes spread all over Afghanistan. Its strongholds are the Kandahar, Helmand and Uruzgan provinces which largely inhabited by the Durani Pashtoons, who produced two founders of Afghanistan — Mir Wais and Ahmad Shah Abdali — and gave the country all its Kings until Zahir Shah's dethronement in 1973.

In fact, the monopoly of power by Tajik military commanders and politicians from Kandahar and its two neighbouring provinces is so pervasive that many ordinary Afghans are nowdays found commenting that earlier it were Massoud's Pashtuners who were ruling Afghanistan and now Mulla Omar's Kandaharis call the shots. Another undeniable fact is that Pashtu language is now more widely used in official quarters and is getting the lion's share in programmes broadcast by the government-run Radio Sitar.

Taliban's recent military losses in Takhar and Baghlan remind one of the reverses suffered by them twice in the past in the Shomali area north of Kabul. Once in late 1986 after capturing Kabul, and subsequently in 1997, the Taliban had to retreat from the Shomali area, including

Qarabagh, Charikar, Bagram and Jalalabad, because the local Tajik population took up arms against them and gave sanctuaries to Massoud's fighters. According to the Taliban fighters, who survived the military onslaught, they were fired at from every house in Charikar and were not spared even while praying in mosques.

One reason why the Taliban feel reluctant to launch another major attack in the Shomali area and render Kabul unsafe from the frequent rocket attacks is the realisation that they may not be able to retain control of the Tajik villages and towns even if they are able to push back Massoud's frontlines towards his native Panjshir valley. That also explains why Massoud is still able to retain control of the Bagram airbase so close to the Kabul frontlines and uses it for receiving the much-needed military and other supplies from Tajikistan, Russia and Iran.

The Taliban's control of Takhar, capital of Takhar province bordering Tajikistan, appeared perilous all the time. They weren't able to push ahead to capture Khwajabagh or Farkhar to be able to consolidate their control over Takhar and effectively cut-off Massoud's supply lines to Panjshir. According to Taliban sources, the Massoud commanders who had defected to them betrayed them in the end and rejoined Massoud. They said local people were supplied at least three guns each by Massoud and advised to surrender one each to the Taliban and hide the other two for use in any subsequent uprising.

In accordance with their standard policy, the Taliban did launch a campaign to collect arms and disarm the population in captured parts of Takhar. But they weren't able to collect all the arms, as had happened earlier in the Shomali area north of Kabul.

At the appointed hour one night, the revolt began and the Taliban were caught unawares in their sleep. Takhar fell without much fight, a number of Taliban were killed or captured, and many more escaped to the Bagram area on the border between Takhar and Baghlan along the Kunduz.

This is the same Bagram where the two sides had their frontlines before the fall of Takhar to the Taliban on August 11. Once again, Bagram has become the frontline with the Taliban forced to put everything into battle to defend Kunduz.

By losing the Andarab valley in Baghlan province, the Taliban have exposed their flanks to the resurgent Massoud forces. The Taliban would now have to reinforce their positions to defend strategic towns of Khenjui, Dostli and Pule Khumri on the Salang highway linking Mazar-i-Sharif to Kabul and avoid being trapped by opposition forces.

The comeback by Massoud's forces in Takhar and Baghlan would surely embolden the other opposition groups to start challenging the Taliban. It appears likely that many opposition fighters are still living in Taliban-controlled areas in Northern Afghanistan and many of them would also have access to hidden arms.

Uzbek warlords General Rasheed Dostum and General Abdul Malik can not be expected to sit idle even after having lost all their power and glory to the Taliban. The Shiite Hazb-i-Wadai must also be waiting for a chance to avenge its defeat in Mazar-i-Sharif and Bamian. Ismaili militia head Mansoor Naifar, whose stronghold of Keyan valley in Baghlan province was overrun by the Taliban without a fight, too has to settle scores with the student militia.

More importantly, all of them are assured of maximum military and material assistance by Russia, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Iran because the governments in these countries have not bothered to hide their hatred for the Taliban and have even hurled military threats at them. It is now an open secret that Tajikistan has become a staging post for supplying arms and ammunition to Massoud and an airbase at Kuyab has been exclusively set aside for this purpose. The interception of an Iranian train recently in Kyrgyzstan, carrying 700 tonnes of weapons for Massoud, blew the lid off the clandestine operations aimed at keeping Afghanistan embroiled in war and the Taliban on the defensive.

The fact that the train was able to make its way safely from Mazar-i-Sharif in Kyrgyzstan via Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan points towards an elaborate gun-running operation in which both governments and mafias could be involved. That the train was reported to be carrying flour and other humanitarian assistance for Afghan people explains how organised and well-rehearsed the operation was. The seizure of the arms-laden Iranian train proved beyond doubt what was already an open secret — that Tehran was openly taking sides in the Afghan civil war and sending arms to its favourites.

It also established that while Pakistan had been able to hide its own involvement in Afghanistan's affairs and still received the flak for being the principal backer of the Taliban, Iran on the other hand wasn't much concerned about hiding its interference in Afghanistan and was rather doing so even more openly after the latest round of Taliban victories.

It is obvious that the Taliban would now come under increased military pressure in largely non-Pashtoon areas. They would also have to cope with acts of sabotage in Western Afghanistan, which is already under pressure due to the convergence of over 270,000 Iranian troops just beyond the border. In fact, the Taliban were always of the view that the Iranian military deployment wasn't meant to attack Afghanistan but to relieve the pressure on anti-Taliban forces, including that of Massoud, and stop them from capturing the remaining few provinces outside their control.

The Iranians appear to have partly achieved that objective and the latest round of its military exercises on the Afghan border could be an attempt to further frighten the Taliban and embolden Massoud and other opposition groups to push them out not only from Northern Afghanistan but also Kabul.

# US asks Taliban not to shelter terrorists

Nation 981102

WASHINGTON (NNI)—A senior US State Department official Michael Malanonski has called on Taliban not to give refuge to international terrorists and bring Osama Bin Laden to justice.

He was speaking at a conference in Washington organised jointly by a non-governmental US organization, The Afghan Foundation and Central Asian Studies Institute affiliated with Jhon Hopkins University. The conference discussed the Afghan issue and the US role and policy in the region.

He asked Taliban to honour their commitments about anti-narcotics campaign and give up violations of human rights, women right and rights of ethnic minorities.

He threw light on the policy of the US administration and called for cease-fire and intra-Afghan dialogue aimed at finding a political settlement to the problem which can lead to the establishment of a broad based government representing all the Afghan ethnic groups.

He said that such a government should respect and implement international principles and norms and should effectively represent Afghanistan on international level and bilateral talks in issues like human rights and prevention of drugs and terrorism. He said that the United States had been making efforts to achieve these objectives.

He welcomed Taliban decision on banning mines but expressed concern that some Afghan groups were still using mines.

He said that the United States wants that other warring Afghan factions too should stop use of mines and foreign countries should not supply more

mines to Afghanistan. He also praised the progress in talks between the Taliban and UN Special Envoy on resumption of humanitarian operations and activities in Afghanistan.

He said: "The United States is very much interested in the resolution of the Afghan conflict. But eventually the Afghans themselves have to find a solution to the problem. The Afghans have proved to the world that outsiders cannot impose their will on them.

Malanonski said that the situation in Afghanistan had its impacts on all. And that is why nobody can shut his eyes on the issues like drugs, terrorism and human rights. The United States has given full attention to the Afghan issue, he added.

He said Iran and Pakistan had their vital interests and the spread of drugs, terrorism and lawlessness had caused loss to both the countries. "Refugees have taken shelter in the two countries putting burden on their economies," he added.

He said that he was in Peshawar when terrorist bomb blasts were taking place in Pakistan.

He went on to say that they had all along been discussing such issues in an organised manner in the meetings of Six Plus Two Group on Afghanistan. He said that they do understand each others view points and had been discussing ways and means for restoration of peace in Afghanistan.

He said that the United States was persuading not only these countries but all the states to make efforts for finding an amicable solution to the Afghan conflict and support the joint efforts of the United Nations and Organization of Islamic conference in this regard.

## Taliban allow 10 foreign NGOs to resume work in Kabul

News 981105

KABUL: Afghanistan's Taliban authorities have allowed 10 western aid groups to resume operations in Kabul after they gave in to earlier Taliban demands, officials said Wednesday.

Raz Mohammad, in-charge of the non-governmental organisations (NGOs) section in the planning ministry, told reporters the aid groups had agreed to shift their location to the Polytechnic compound, chosen by the Taliban authorities.

Around 20 NGOs were expelled from Kabul in July after they refused a demand by the Islamic militia that they give up their offices and residences and move to the isolated and dilapidated polytechnic.

"In their letters, they have agreed that they would go to the polytechnic" building, Raz Mohammad said.

The aid groups who are already in Kabul can use their previous offices, but they also have to sign separate contracts with the polytechnic authorities to work out details including rent and duration of their stay, he said.

The NGOs granted resumption permits include the German Agro-Action, the International Assistance Mission, the Action Contra le Faim, the Dutch Committee for Afghanistan, the Swedish Committee for Afghanistan, a Danish aid group DACAR, the German Peace Village and the Swiss Terre des Hommes.

The Taliban official also explained German Agro-Action would soon start repairing one block in the bombed-out compound to be allotted to other NGOs.

They said concern was growing among the aid groups they would face acute shortages of funds following a total aid ban by the EC which had been a key donor of assistance to the humanitarian operations in Afghanistan.—AFP

## Taliban jailed for defacing Buddha

News 981106

KABUL: Armed Taliban soldiers have been deployed to protect Afghanistan's ancient statues of Buddha and a "miscreant" Taliban soldier who fired at the archeological treasures has been jailed, Mohammed Naeem Sufi, director of planning and foreign relations said Wednesday.

"We are trying to preserve our historical monuments," he told the Associated Press in an interview in the beleaguered capital. "It is not the policy of the Taliban to destroy our cultural heritage."

Sufi's comments followed reports that a 35-metre (105-foot) Buddha was damaged during a battle in September between the Taliban army and their Shiite Muslim enemies for control of Bamyan province, home to two giant buddha statues. A Taliban soldier, who wouldn't give his name, said that a Taliban fired a tank shell at the Buddha, but "it's ok."

While Sufi said the renegade soldier fired a handgun at the statue, several separate witnesses, who fled the fighting, said the damage to the statue was a gaping hole in the face and in the groin area. "When the Taliban captured Bamyan, one of the miscreants fired his pistol at the statues," said Sufi. "When the higher authorities learned about it he was arrested and now we have deployed guards to save the statues."

Two years ago front line Taliban commanders threatened to destroy the statues, including a 55 metre Buddha — the world's tallest standing Buddha.—AP

## Taliban for evidence against Osama within 10 days

Nation 981110

From Our Correspondent

PESHAWAR—Afghanistan's Chief Justice Maulvi Noor Mohammad Saqib has asked those who charge Osama Bin Laden with harbouring terrorism to provide solid evidences in this connection within 10 days otherwise, they would acquit him honourably.

"We believe in a united Afghanistan and those who are involved in criminal acts could be dealt with an iron hand but the complainant must provide solid proofs," he remarked in an interview published by local Pushto daily *Wahdat* on Monday. He informed that Amirul Momineen Mullah Mohammad Omer has issued a declaration saying each and every one can submit

solid proofs in favour of his charges against Osama Bin Laden before the justice department. "If Osama was found guilty," he would face punishment under the Islamic laws," he added. Maulvi Noor Mohammad Saqib denounced the American's reward of five million dollars for the arrest of Osama and said that through it the Americans are further promoting terrorism.

Maulvi Saqib said that Maulvi Mohammad Omer had directed them to invite solid proofs against Osama Bin Ladin. The Islamic movement is determined to restore a peaceful and crime-free atmosphere in Afghanistan and in this connection, the Islamic Shariah is being followed without any discrimination.



# Taliban negotiate pipeline project with Bidas

Lose interest in UNOCAL corporation

News 981105

By Mariana Baabar

ISLAMABAD: The Taliban regime in Kabul appears to have lost interest in UNOCAL corporation for the proposed \$3 billion gas pipeline from Turkmenistan into Pakistan.

The Afghans are now finalising discussion with the Argentine firm BRIDAS and say that they are close to clinching a deal with them once the Govt of Pakistan gives the go ahead.

The proposed pipeline for gas transmission from Turkmenistan to Pakistan will cover 1,271km with 48 inches diameter and capacity of 20 billion cubic meters of gas per annum.

Afghan diplomats in Islamabad said on Wednesday that they recently sealed the offices of UNOCAL in Kabul and asked two Pakistani and one Saudi official to leave Afghanistan. However, Western diplomats expressed surprise over this report saying that the UNOCAL office

was still functioning while all Americans at UNOCAL had left Afghanistan before the US missile attack. They cited the growing security concerns and bleak economic prospects of the gas pipeline as reasons for their leaving.

Afghan sources further claim that Chairman of BRIDAS, Carlos Vulgheroni has held meetings both with the President of Turkmenistan and with the Taliban regime. Since the gas pipeline will eventually come into Multan from where the distribution will be made, the go ahead from the Pakistan government is still awaited.

A former PPP minister who had an access to the information when UNOCAL was in the race says that hot words were exchanged by former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto and former US Ambassador Thomas Simons Jr on the issue. "In one meeting, Simons accused Pakistan of monetary gains from BRIDAS to allow it to win the bid for the gas pipeline.

## Anti-Taliban troops capture Nejrab

Nation 981118

KABUL (AFP) - Forces loyal to ethnic Tajik commander Ahmad Shah Masood have captured the district of Nejrab, 85 kilometres northeast of Kabul, an opposition spokesman said Tuesday.

Mohammad Aref also said fighting between the Taliban Islamic militia and Masood's forces in northern Afghanistan around Burka and Ishkani districts had eased overnight.

However, 10 civilians were killed in Taliban aerial bombardments in residential areas surrounding Nejrab.

'Fighting continued till late in the evening. Nejrab and its five main villages — parts of Tagab — have also been taken,' he said.

Tagab is a neighbouring regional centre held by the Taliban, who control about 90 per cent of Afghanistan.

The focus on Nejrab was designed to retake positions lost by Masood after the Taliban launched their autumn offensive on October 10.

The militia has since heavily mined the 10-kilometre strip between the two centres and one Western analyst estimated that any attempt to cross the zone could result in 30 per cent to 50 per cent casualties.

'Fighting is still going on around Tagab district,' Aref added.

## Famine in central Afghanistan

News 981126

ISLAMABAD: Reports from Afghanistan reveal that a famine-like situation is fast developing in Central Afghanistan where thousands of lives were expected to fall prey to deaths due to starvation.

According to sources, continuous fighting among the various Afghan factions since last many years, has caused shortage of food grain particularly in the central parts of Afghanistan which led to famine-like situation in the area.

Though the Taliban government has repeatedly requested the international community to despatch food stuff to forestall the dreaded eventuality but response of the United Nations and international community was not encouraging, the sources added.—APP

## Afghan rivals seek trial of Osama bin Laden

KABUL (AFP) - Saudi dissident Osama bin Laden is the "mastermind of crimes" and must stand trial, the official spokesman for Afghan opposition commander Ahmad Shah Masood said Thursday.

The spokesman, Mohammad Aref, said the billionaire should leave Afghanistan and also accused him of actively collaborating in the Taliban military operations.

"We believe he is the mastermind of crimes and must be tried," Aref said.

"It doesn't matter for us against whom his crimes are directed. We condemn the crimes in their essence," he added.

Aref said Osama "lives illegally" in Afghanistan and he should be deported to a third country.

"If he is a guest, he should retire to a room. No foreigner can take part in the fighting against the Afghan people," he said, referring to Taliban military operations against Masood.

"We cannot comment on this now as Osama is not with us," Aref said after being asked if the alliance would hand him over to the US.

He blamed bin Laden entirely for allowing his ethnic Arab followers to take part in Taliban's operations which Aref said were "crimes against" the Afghan people.

"These Arabs have committed crimes; they have beheaded civilians and they should be punished," he said.

Bin Laden uses his money for training mercenary groups to destabilize Afghanistan's northern neighbours, the Muslim Central Asian Republics, Aref alleged.

"We have clear evidence that Osama is training terrorists and subversive groups in his camps to be sent to countries like Tajikistan and Uzbekistan," he claimed.



Natoun 981104

# Afghan deadly war a child's play

## Afghanistan plans world's largest copper mine

News 981109

KABUL: An international consortium will begin assessing copper reserves in Afghanistan shortly which could lead to the development of the world's largest copper mine, Deputy Mines Minister Abdul Salam Zaeef said Sunday.

Nine entrepreneurs had signed a memorandum of understanding to develop the mine at Logar, 35 kilometres (21 miles) south of Kabul, which held reserves of 11 billion tonnes, he added.

However, he said the initial tests had been conducted by Russia during its occupation of Afghanistan and needed to be confirmed.

The consortium's engineers were expected to begin assessments within two months as part of a broader one billion dollar investment plan, and report back with final estimates and costs by May next year.

"Historically copper reserves were seen in the vicinity of about 10 million tonnes but when the Russians arrived they upgraded the resource to 11 billion tonnes," he said "The estimates are the biggest in the world."

The consortium consisted of businessmen from America, South Africa, Britain, France, Germany and Pakistan. The Escondida copper mine in Chile is currently the biggest pro-

ducer in the world. It is 57.5 per cent owned by Australia's BHP Co. Ltd.

Zaeef said Afghanistan's ruling Taliban was optimistic about the Logar site because the copper was close to the surface and could be easily accessed through open cut mining.

The Taliban have secured about 80 per cent of Afghanistan following four years of bloody civil war, and the Logar copper mine is ideally placed in terms of roads and security.

"On our part there is no problem with security, it has been established," Zaeef said. Most of the fighting between the Taliban and opposition forces loyal to commander Ahmad Shah Masood is concentrated to the north and far northeast of Afghanistan.

Zaeef said international conglomerate Siemens was involved in the venture but declined to say which companies the remaining businessmen represented.

Further investments included the development of two gold mines near the southern regional capital of Kandahar and in the adjacent province of Zabul.

The consortium was also looking at reopening a cement factory at Herat in the southwest, and gas refining in northern Afghanistan.—AFP

ANDARAB, Afghanistan (AFP)

The chubby-cheeked boy, his hair shaved and his face chapped with cold, gleefully helps unload anti-tank rockets from a helicopter in this northern Afghan village.

For the boy, the operation to unload the Soviet-era MI-6 rockets for the forces of opposition commander Ahmed Shah Masood is a game, a welcome distraction from recent battles in the region.

While Masood fights the Taliban militia, Afghan children are bearing the brunt of the conflict.

Between 300,000 and 400,000 children have been killed during the past 20 years' fighting in the war-ravaged country, international aid organisations say.

Up to four million children have died in the same period from malnutrition and illness, according to a recent report by UNICEF and Save the Children.

The report added that 268,000 Afghan children under the age of five die each year from easily treatable illnesses such as diarrhoea and pulmonary conditions.

A quarter of Afghan children fail to reach the age of five for a variety of other reasons, the report says.

Landmines are among the biggest cause of infant fatalities. With some 10 million of the deadly devices scattered across the country, Afghanistan is the most heavily mined

place on Earth.

Young boys venture out of their homes much more than their sheltered sisters, and as a result are far more vulnerable to landmines, which as a rule kill rather than maim children because of their small size.

The children of Andarab, however, appear unconcerned as they ferry new mines for the use of Masood's forces holed up just to the northeast. Their involvement is indicative of the conditions Afghan children grow up in.

The intractable war is all that most of the poorly clothed and barefoot children of this region know. They speak of it with a detachment and a fatality that belie their tender years.

They recall without apparent emotion the battles of the past weeks while speaking with pride of Masood, the ethnic Tajik general whose forces have beaten back a Taliban advance that threatened to put the whole country under the Islamic militia's control.

For most school is nothing but a distant memory as they labour on their parents' meagre paddy fields and farnis, threatened by the ubiquitous mines.

Hardly easy at the best of times, life is about to get much harder for the long-suffering children with the onset of the harsh Afghan winter.

## Afghanistan one of the most mine-affected countries

News 981106

By Ismail Khan

PESHAWAR: Latest reports suggest that nearly two decades after Afghanistan plunged into civil war, it is still one of the severely mine-affected countries in the world.

A report published in the 'Hidden Killer' compiled by the Office of Humanitarian Demining Programmes of United States Department of State Bureau of Political-Military Affairs quotes the UN figure for the number of landmines in Afghanistan at 10 million, though the original source of this estimate, it points out, cannot be verified and the actual number may thus never be determined. Quoting another UN study report, it said that the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance to Afghanistan (UNOCHA) reduced the number of landmines to between 5-7 million. Some NGOs, based on actual experience in heavily mined areas, claim that the official estimates are still too high and should be lowered than to less than a million. An estimate by The HALO Trust in 1997 put the figure of landmines at 6,20,000. Roughly 50 different types of anti-personnel and anti-tank mines have been identified during the clearance operations, it said while referring to a UNHCR report.

The estimates are still high enough to place Afghanistan among one of the 12 heavily mine-affected countries of the world. They include

Angola, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Cambodia, Croatia, Eritrea, Iraq, Mozambique, Namibia, Somalia, Nicaragua and Sudan. These 12 countries together account for almost 50 per cent of the landmines currently deployed in the world and also suffer the highest number of landmine casualties.

The report released in September 1998 identified provinces bordering Pakistan and Iran — the western, southern and eastern parts of Afghanistan, covering 162 of the total 356 districts as mine-affected. Security belts of landmines exist around major cities and at airports, government installations, and power stations. Grazing lands, waterways, schools, paths, villages and cities are infested with mostly antipersonnel mines.

The majority of landmines, the report said, have been found in agricultural and grazing lands and in or near irrigation system. It said landmines are responsible for depopulation of vast tracts of the countryside, affecting crop harvests and interfering with the transportation of food supplies into the cities. Roughly 50 per cent of Afghan villages and an estimated 25 per cent of paved roads have been destroyed or ruined.

Referring to recent field surveys conducted by the VVAF and the UNHCR, it said that landmines were the primary reason for refugees leaving Afghanistan and not returning home. Over two million Afghan

refugees remain in Iran and Pakistan.

The continuing civil war, it said, had severely affected the economy of Afghanistan. Its Gross Domestic Product (GDP) has fallen substantially since 1982 because of the loss of labour and capital and the disruption of trade and transport. The UNDP now rates Afghanistan as 171 out of 173 countries in terms of greatest poverty and least development. American Central Intelligence Agency in its 1997 World Fact Book put the mid-1997 total population of the war-ravaged country at 237.38 million.

According to ICRC statistics, the most dangerous activities to rural populations are tilling fields, herding livestock and foraging for wood and food. Overall national figures on the rate of landmine-related injuries and death are not available, but casualty estimates indicate that landmines and Unexploded Ordinance (UXO) cause an estimated 10 to 12 civilian casualties per day. Recent MSF and ICRC surveys suggest that this figure is too low, since many victims never get to treatment centres because of lack of transportation, significant distances, or impassable roads.

UNOCHA's Mine Action Capacities coordinates efforts and those of international NGOs throughout Afghanistan. The UNOCHA 1997 budget included \$ 18 million for mine awareness, mine clearance, surveys, marking, and training.

## Afghan farmers agree to reduce poppy cultivation

Bureau Report

News 981104

PESHAWAR: Farmers in the Shinwar district of Afghanistan's Nangarhar province have agreed to reduce poppy cultivation by 25 per cent in the coming cultivation season.

Decision to this effect was made in a meeting, attended by the Shinwar district administration, officials of the United Nations Drug Control Programme (UNDCP) and the District Drug Control Action Shooru at the office of the District Administration on October 31.

Highlighting the policy of the Afghanistan government regarding poppy cultivation, Maulvi Kifayatullah, the District Administrator of Shinwar said that the government was serious in its resolve to reduce the poppy cultivation. He stressed upon the farmers to bring down the poppy growth by 25 per cent as compared to the yield last season. He added that the UNDCP had already implemented a number of projects to check the poppy cultivation in the district.

Maulvi Amir, the coordinator of the NDCCU, in his address said that the UNDCP had funded projects to the tune of \$ 801,711, whereas others were close to completion, he added.

# Osama will not be handed over to US: Omar

News 981111

By Rahimullah Yusufzai

PESHAWAR: Taliban leader Mulla Mohammad Omar has said his government is not prepared to hand over Saudi dissident Osama bin Laden to the United States even if it meant recognition for the Taliban as the legitimate authority in Afghanistan.

"It has now become clear that Washington would recognise the Taliban-led Afghan government if it agreed to extradite Bin Laden to the US," he said in an interview with 'The News' from his movement's headquarters in Kandahar in south-western Afghanistan.

Mulla Omar complained that the whole issue of international recognition for the Taliban government now revolved round the person of Bin Laden. "This seems to be the only hurdle to winning recognition for the Taliban as other issues like respect for human and women's rights and control of drug-trafficking by the Taliban are no longer mentioned as vigorously as in the past," he said.

The Taliban supreme leader argued that it meant the student militia have fulfilled all other conditions

and would be allowed to represent Afghanistan at the UN and other world bodies as soon as they extradited Bin Laden to the US. He was also critical of the UN and the Western countries for blindly following the US policy on not recognising the Taliban government.

Announcing support for Afghanistan's Chief Justice, Noor Mohammad Saqib's statement in which he set a November 20 deadline for the US to prove that Bin Laden was a terrorist, Mulla Omar said Washington's failure to do so would mean that Bin Laden was innocent. He said the indictment order deposited in an American court accusing Bin Laden of involvement in acts of terrorism wasn't enough of an evidence. He made it clear Afghanistan's Shariat Court functioned independently of the government and was empowered to punish even someone like Bin Laden.

The US State Department spokesman, James Rubin, responding to the Taliban deadline of November 20, said in Washington Monday that there could be no expiration date on terrorist acts of this kind. He said the facts mentioned in

the indictment order speak for themselves. According to him, the real issue was as to why the Taliban continue to provide safe haven to Bin Laden. He said the US government had made it clear to Taliban on several occasions that they must stop harbouring "well-known terrorists" like Bin Laden. He also stressed the need for bringing Bin Laden to justice swiftly.

It may be added that the US government recently announced a \$5 million reward each for information leading to the arrest and/or conviction of Bin Laden and Mohammad Atef, referred to as his military commander by Washington.

Meanwhile, joint delegations of the Taliban and former defence minister Ahmad Shah Masud have gone to areas controlled by the two sides to prepare lists of prisoners of war for a possible exchange of prisoners in future.

The two delegations were formed on the initiative of Syed Jalal, an Afghan businessman and intellectual based in Saudi Arabia, who has been mediating between the Taliban and their opponents. Syed Jalal has already secured exchange of some prisoners between the two sides.

## Taliban rivals claim more gains in north

ISLAMABAD (AFP) - The Afghan opposition claimed Sunday it had taken two more northern districts while the Taliban admitted losing territory in previous attacks, the Afghan Islamic Press (AIP) reported.

The district of Nahrin in Baghlan province and Dasht-e-Archi in Kunduz province were overrun late Saturday by forces loyal to opposition commander Ahmad Shah Masood, the Pakistan-based private information agency said.

AIP quoted opposition sources as saying Masood's troops had also made other territorial gains in Kunduz around the towns of Khanabad and Ernam Sahib and took hundreds of Taliban prisoners. No independent confirmation of the opposition claim was available.

On Saturday the opposition claimed to have captured the district of Ishkanih in Takhar province and the district of Burka in Baghlan. Both provinces border on Kunduz.

AIP said a Taliban spokesman admitted the fall of Ishkanih, which lies on the supply route from Masood's base in the Panjsher Valley to the Tajikistan border.

But the spokesman denied the fall of other areas and claimed that the Islamic militia had repulsed the attacks.

"Dasht-e-Archi is fully in control of Taliban and we have beaten off all attacks by Masood's forces."

the spokesman, Mullah Amur Khan Mutraqi, told AIP.

Mutraqi said the Taliban had also repelled attacks on the district of Nahrin and Burka in Baghlan.

The Taliban spokesman blamed Masood for breaking a one-week truce agreement that was mediated between the two sides by a Saudi Arabia-based Afghan intellectual Sayed Jalal two days ago.

"We are still ready for a truce to facilitate an exchange of prisoners between the two sides," the spokesman said.

BBC reported on Sunday a senior leader of Afghan opposition Hizb-e-Wahdat, Hiji Muhammad Muhaqeg, has dismissed the reports of his surrender to the Taliban.

He strongly condemned the Taliban Deputy Interior Minister Khaksar, for making false claim of his (Muhaqeg) surrender in a press conference. He termed the Taliban as puppets of Pakistan's Inter Services Intelligence (ISI), adding that the presence of the student militia and Pakistanis in Afghanistan was provocative, illegal and violations of all international recognized norms and principles. Muhaqeg ruled out his joining hands with the Taliban.

He also expressed doubts about the surrender of chief of break-away faction of Hizb-e-Wahdat, Muhammad Akbari and said that he did not believe that a person like him (Akbari) could defect to the Taliban.

Kabul airport heavily rocketed

## Masood claims

Fr 981129

## more gains

KABUL (AFP) - Opposition forces Saturday staged a series of rocket strikes on Kabul airport and claimed the capture of a strategic border district from the Taliban militia in Kunduz province in far north Afghanistan.

Residents said at least five people were wounded after about a dozen rockets struck the airport on the northern outskirts of the capital.

"But thankfully no-one was killed," one resident said.

Anti-Taliban commander Ahmad Shah Masood has targeted the airport where Taliban traffic has been heavy over recent nights, using heavy rockets from the Russian-made Luna series, and lower grade missiles.

The rocket strikes came as forces attached to Masood entered the river port town of Sher Khan Bander on the Afghan side of the country's border with Tajikistan, an opposition spokesman said.

The spokesman, Abdullah, said opposition troops faced minimal resistance after launching a three-pronged attack.

"The Taliban did not offer any resistance and fled, our forces are only 25 kilometres from Kunduz city which is now under threat from three directions," he told AFP Saturday.

According to opposition reports, Masood has now made substantial gains across the Afghan side of the far north border with Tajikistan stretching from his supply base in Taloqan.

One analyst said Sher Khan Bander is highly important given its first class port facilities along the Amu River, and access bridge to Tajikistan from where Masood can bolster supplies.

Independent confirmation was not immediately available while a Taliban spokesman said he was unable to comment on the reports.

Abdullah said Saturday's operations were an extension of advances made over the past two days when Taliban frontlines were broken enabling Masood to advance west from Bangi and Imam Sahib in north Kunduz.

Both districts form part of an intricate supply network that both sides are attempting to take and secure ahead of winter.

Masood, an ethnic Tajik, initially lost the mountainous routes which extend from the Central Asian republics to his Pansher Valley base during the militia's sweeping northern offensive in July and August.

Elsewhere, Abdullah said the Taliban had also launched at least

12 aerial bombardments at Charikar, 64 kilometres north of Kabul and on Masood-held villages to the north of Kabul. But there were no immediate reports of casualties, he added. However, fighting in Fariyab province, which had been extensive late this week, had eased, Abdullah said.

## US offers Taliban recognition in return for Osama

LONDON (NNI) - The United States has called upon the Taliban militia in Afghanistan to extradite Osama Bin Laden if they wanted to win international recognition, reports BBC.

The offer was made by the officials of the US State Department while reacting to Taliban's fixing of November 20 as deadline for receiving evidences against Osama Bin Ladin.

The officials said that Taliban can see the indictment order of Osama Bin Laden which they had issued last week. The order contains all information about the crimes committed by Bin Lden.

The US officials once again urged the Taliban to extradite Osama as he is a terrorist.

Fr 981111

## 60 coup-plotters fr 981105 flown to Kandahar Taliban release 107 more POWs

By AIMAL KHAN

PESHAWAR - Taliban authorities Wednesday air dashed 60 prisoners, arrested on charges of conspiracy to topple the government in Kabul, to the militia's headquarters at Kandahar for further interrogation.

According to Sahaar news agency, the Taliban authorities arrested more than 170 political personalities from eastern provinces of Kunar, Laghman and Nangrahar for an alleged coup attempt few days back.

The Taliban's claims notwithstanding, many Afghan leaders including Sayed Isahaq Gillani, strongly denied the charges leveled against the arrested persons, majority of whom were prominent tribal chiefs and leaders.

Prominent among those who were airlifted to Kandahar included former governor Laghman of province Abdul Malik Safi, a well-known Jehadi Commander Ghazi Khan, Haji Basir Mehmood, Sayed Abdul Razaq Pacha, Mohammad Anwar Sultan, Jehandad, a former member of Afghan Parliament, Siad Hussain, Abdul Samad Chaknawar and Moulvi Kamal alias Moulvi Parchami.

Also on Wednesday, the Taliban on the directives of their supreme leader Mullah Mohammad Omer Mujahid, released 108 opposition prisoners in Kandahar.

Taliban sources confided to *The Frontier Post* from Kandahar by telephone Wednesday night that Mollah Omer as a good gesture ordered the release of 107 prisoners unilaterly.

Majority of those released belonged to Taliban's newly-captured areas of Sur-i-Pul, Jowzjan, Balkh and Ghor.

AFP adds: The opposition prisoners were released from jails in southern city of Kandahar, the Afghan Islamic Press (AIP) reported.

Quoting sources in Kandahar, the base of the Islamic militia, the private information service said the prisoners were not handed over to any intermediary.

The Taliban authorities have made arrangements to help the released men reach their homes, the Pakistan-based AIP said, without giving logistical details.

It said the rival troops were captured by the Taliban at various frontlines since last year in northern and northeastern provinces.

The Taliban and opposition forces loyal to commander Ahmadi Shah Masood appeared to be observing an unofficial truce for the exchange of prisoners as the frontlines remained calm, AIP said.

A week-long ceasefire that was mediated by a Saudi Arabia-based Afghan intellectual, Sayed Jalal, for the swap of prisoners expired Monday.

# Taliban welcome aid sans bargain on sovereignty

NEW S 981202

By Ashfaq Yusufzai

our own and in line with our national interests and are not prone to dancing before foreign countries including Pakistan," he said. However, he was grateful to Pakistan's government and people for having extended full-fledged support to their Afghan brothers in the hour of need.

He was confident that the reconstruction process will commence in Afghanistan and said Afghans were most laborious and hard working and they would undertake the challenging task of rebuilding once the communication and electricity networks were made functional. On agriculture side, he said, Afghans would be able to deliver the goods.

About the isolationist posture of their supreme leader, Mullah Muhammad Omar, he said that he was very busy to tackle affairs relating to military and consulting his advisors regarding matters of national importance. However, he has the supreme authority which distinguishes him from the other leaders in the world, he claimed.

He said awarding punishments in accordance with the holy Qur'an had established peace in a country once infamous for loot and plunder. Now, said Mutawakkil, anybody can travel safely inside Afghanistan even with a truckload of gold.

Mutawakkil conceded that there might be some flaws and shortcomings with regard to their way of governance but hoped very soon the situation would be changed for a better. Moreover, he hoped that sooner or later Taliban would run over the remaining five per cent areas presently under the occupation of the Northern Alliance.

About, the inclusions of leaders other than Pakhtuns in the government, he said, they cannot share power with those already tested by the Afghans. The UN, he said, should recognise the Taliban government which had 95 per cent of the whole Afghan territory under its control.

PESHAWAR: Afghanistan's ruling Taliban say they would welcome assistance and reconstruction work by foreign countries but without compromising on national interests.

Maulvi Wakil Ahmad Mutawakkil, a close aid of Taliban Supreme leader Mullah Muhammad Omar, in an interview with The News said that the war-battered country of Afghanistan was in dire need of foreign assistance for reconstruction but said that no donor country will be allowed to interfere in the internal affairs of Afghanistan. NGOs, he said, should also resume their operations but reminded they will be required to abide by the laws of the country.

Mutawakkil set aside the impression that women were banned from going to schools and offices saying that after overcoming the economic nightmare separate schools and working conditions will be created to enable the womenfolk to contribute towards the development of the Emirate of Afghanistan within the Islamic values. He argued that religion and tradition did not allow them to take their female patients to male doctors and therefore, they needed to produce more female doctors and nurses than any other nation. "But this all will take time. We can't allow co-education as our religion and tradition does not permit it," said Mutawakkil.

He said their policies, both internal and external, were within the principles of Islam, adding they did not want to intervene in the internal matters of other countries and expected similar approach from others towards Afghanistan.

Mutawakkil, 30, was optimistic about betterment in relations with the European countries saying it was a matter of time to develop a kind of relations based on principles and mutual understanding with all the states across the globe.

"We are taking our decisions at

## Taliban sign accord for oil, gas exploration

ISLAMABAD (NNI) - Taliban have signed an agreement with a Greek company on oil and gas exploration in Afghanistan, reported Bakhtar news agency on Sunday.

Taliban Minister for Mines and Industries Maulvi Ahmed Jan, visiting Greece, is reported to have signed the accord with chief of a Greek company, CCC, after four days of negotiations.

Under the accord, the company would soon start oil and gas exploration in Herat province of Afghanistan.

A delegation of investors from the United States, European countries and South Africa has also recently visited war-ravaged Afghanistan to explore the possibilities of investment in different fields particularly in communication, mines and oil and gas.

Advisor to the Saudi royal family and a prominent Afghan businessman, Syed Jalal, at present in Afghanistan, to broker peace between the warring factions, is said to have recently accompanied a Taliban delegation to Greece.

Source said Jalal has played a key role in signing of the accord between the Taliban and Greek company on oil and gas exploration in Afghanistan.

## Taliban have failed to honour accord: UN

ISLAMABAD (NNI) - The United Nations international staff has yet not returned to Afghanistan due to Taliban's failure to fully implement the last month agreement with the United Nations, a UN official said on Sunday.

"We have not yet sent international staff to Afghanistan and are still waiting for progress on the security agreement by Taliban," the official, associated with UN Office for Humanitarian Assistance to Afghanistan (UN-OCHA) told NNI.

Taliban and the United Nations signed a "security agreement" in Islamabad on October 23 that had made the student militia responsible for the security of UN personnel and UN premises in Afghanistan. The 11-point agreement inked after five days of talks, wherein the two parties reached an understanding over the security arrangements for the UN personnel in the war-torn country.

The United Nations pulled some 50 foreign workers out of Afghanistan on August 21 after the killing of an Italian UN worker Carmine Calo who was shot dead by an angry demonstration against the US Cruise Missile attack on Osama Bin Laden in the eastern province of Khost.

Under the agreement Taliban would have to provide protection to the UN premises. It also guaranteed that if any UN staff member is detained they should be released within 72 hours in the absence of formal charges against them. Also that UN staff would be allowed if they want to visit any of its detained staff to provide them medical treatment and legal requirements.

# Ethnicity only cause of Taliban massacre in northern Afghanistan

FP 981130  
WASHINGTON (NNI) - After being attacked twice last year by the Taliban, Mazar-e Sharif could no longer claim to be that battered country's last refuge from the civil war.

But hardly anyone in the dusty city on the northern plains was prepared for what happened when the Taliban took control with a vengeance on their third try.

On August 8 and the days that followed, Taliban militiamen and their allies methodically executed between 2,000 and 5,000 civilians in one of the deadliest mass killings of civilians in two decades of warfare in Afghanistan, according to interviews with witnesses who later fled to Pakistan and reports by international human rights investigators. Taliban militiamen searched house to house for males of fighting age who belonged to the Hazara ethnic minority, says a report in Washington on Sunday.

Hazaras were gunned down in front of their families or had their throats slit. Others, thrown into the city's overcrowded jail, were executed by firing squads or crammed into tractor-trailers, where they sweltered all day in the summer sun - doors shut - until most perished from suffocation or heat stroke. In the evenings, the heavy trucks hauled the bodies to the nearby desert and dumped them in heaps like trash, according to the reports.

Sketchy reports of the slaughter were circulated at the time, but the full extent and the systematic character of the mass murder there have only become known in the months since, as human rights investigators have interviewed survivors who fled to Pakistan and elsewhere.

The killings illustrate how the Afghan civil war has in the past two years turned toward ethnic conflict fed by tribal hatreds and blood revenge.

Although the Taliban fought its way to dominance under a unifying banner of Islam, in ethnic terms its rule represents a return to the pre-communist days of rule by Pashtuns, Afghanistan's largest ethnic group. In taking over Mazar-e Sharif, the Taliban also added a sectarian twist. The Hazara group that was singled out for slaughter is predominantly Shiite Muslim; the Taliban is a Sunni Muslim movement.

In addition, the Taliban's attack on Mazar-e Sharif claimed the lives of nine Iranians, provoking Shiite-dominated Iran to rattle a

big Persian sword on the border, mobilizing tens of thousands of elite troops for military exercises that stretched over an entire month.

William Maley, an Australian specialist on Afghanistan, said that the Mazar-e-Sharif killing was "striking in its viciousness" even by Afghan standards. "What we saw in August was not civilians caught in the cross-fire between combatants, but an orgy of killing driven by racial and religious prejudice," he said.

"Afghanistan is teetering on the edge of major ethnic conflict and perhaps even a genocide," Mazar-e Sharif had remained the last major city holding out against the Taliban's strict rule of Afghanistan, which has included the imposition of Islamic law and tight controls on women.

But until the shooting started that Saturday morning in August, few residents had any warning that most of the forces defending Mazar-e-Sharif had slipped away overnight or had defected, leaving the city's gates wide open to the Taliban.

Shock troops arriving in pickup trucks and cars fired automatic weapons at everyone in sight, regardless of ethnicity, in an apparent effort to terrorize a rebellious population into submission, witnesses said.

"It didn't matter whether they were small children, women, men or old men. They were just shooting at people," said a Hazara woman now living in Quetta.

Down four broad avenues that radiate from Mazar-e Sharif's central square, antiaircraft guns mounted on parked military trucks sprayed heavy bullets as panicked merchants and shoppers broke into a desperate sprint for safety, according to a Hazara truck driver who watched from an upper floor of a nearby building.

In the bedlam, speeding cars hit some people and raced over the bodies of others felled in the firing. After a few hours, the shooting subsided. Blood stained the walls of shops and residential compounds.

For at least three days, bodies lay where they fell on the orders of the Taliban commander who took charge of the city, witnesses said. It was not until the bodies began to rot and stink in the dry summer heat, threatening disease, that the commander, Manon Niazi, allowed burial of the dead. By then, stray dogs were feeding on the bodies.

Recent interviews of Hazara

refugees -- who did not want to be named for fear of reprisals -- and reports released this month by the United Nations and Human Rights Watch were consistent in their general accounts of the initial indiscriminate killing, followed by days of targeting Hazaras.

An Amnesty International report in September mentioned only the ethnic killings. Officially, the Taliban say none of it happened, although Taliban officials have barred human rights investigators and journalists from Mazar-e-Sharif. The Taliban denounced the report of a UN human rights investigator as "vast propaganda," maintaining that its forces had killed only combatants, confiscated firearms from civilians and temporarily evacuated some residents.

But a former Pakistani intelligence official who visited the city afterward said that large-scale killing did occur -- after quick trials.

"Most of the group executions were carried out by the firing squads after summary Islamic courts found those people guilty of treason," the former intelligence official said. "The treatment meted out . . . was clearly defined in Islamic laws."

The paper quoted refugees as saying that the Taliban were accompanied by Pakistani fighters, identifiable by their language, dress and the flag of a Muslim fundamentalist Pakistani party aligned with the Taliban.

In responding to the UN report, the Taliban also cited the summary executions in May 1997 of an estimated 2,000 to 3,000 Taliban prisoners in the Mazar-e-Sharif area. Human rights investigators have concluded that those killings motivated the militia to take revenge. Hazaras, however, were not responsible for the killings.

The newcomers have crowded into run-down motels, dirt-floor basements and, in some cases, mosques. The financially strapped office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees here has been able to provide limited aid to no more than 150 destitute families. Despite their desperate circumstances, some refugees talked of revenge. A doctor who fled from south of Mazar-e Sharif, for instance, quoted a Hazara proverb about a defeated people rising to fight back. "When the glass is broken, it is getting sharper," he said. "We are the broken glass."



# Taliban claim surrender of leading Shia leader

News 981114

By Rahimullah Yusufzai

PESHAWAR: The Taliban Friday claimed that a leading Shia leader, Hujjatul Islam Mohammad Akbari, had surrendered to them along with 20 of his close aides and military commanders in Bamiyan province in central Afghanistan.

The claim was made by Mulla Abdul Hye Mutmain, a Taliban spokesman in Kandahar in southwestern Afghanistan.

Mutmain said that two Shia military commanders, Sangardost and Habibullah, who were pro-Taliban, were instrumental in convincing Akbari and his lieutenants to surrender to the Taliban-led Islamic government in Afghanistan. He said details were awaited about the identity of the other men who surrendered along with Akbari. According to Mutmain, the sur-

render took place in Waras district of Bamiyan province.

Akbari is head of the breakaway faction of the Hezb-i-Wahdat. The mainstream Hezb-i-Wahdat is led by Karim Khalili, whose whereabouts aren't known. The two factions were allied to former defence minister Ahmad Shah Masood and Uzbek warlord Gen Abdul Rasheed Dostum in the civil war against the Taliban.

Bamiyan city, inhabited by Hazara people who are Shia and Persian-speaking, fell to the Taliban, who Sunni and largely Pashtoon, on September 13. Later, they occupied the whole of the mountainous Bamiyan province except one district and confronted minimum of resistance. Yakawalang, military headquarters of the Hezb-i-Wahdat, also fell to the Taliban without much resistance.

## Copper mines exploration

# Taliban ink accord with S. African firm

Sp 981124

ISLAMABAD (NNI) - Taliban Minister for Mines and Industries Maulvi Ahmed Jan has said that they have signed an accord with a South African company on copper exploration in Afghanistan.

In an interview, Maulvi Ahmed Jan said that engineers of the South African company are arriving in Afghanistan on November 25. The Taliban administration, he said, is making hectic efforts to fully utilize the country's resources.

He said that 38 oil wells have been discovered in Jauzjan province. A total of 20000 barrels oil would daily be extracted from them and the reserves would meet the country's demand for the next 30 years, he said, adding that gold was also available in plenty at five different places.

The minister denied that Taliban administration has made the foreigners bound to grow beard and said that such law does not apply on the foreigners, but the Afghans, he made it clear, must grow beard. He said that Taliban have not committed high handedness against anyone in Afghanistan.

Maulvi Ahmed Jan said that the Taliban are not opposed to women

education rather are against co-education. He said that women can become doctors and teachers and there should be separate educational institutions for girls and boys.

About Osama Bin Laden, the Taliban minister said that so far no evidence has been produced against him. The Saudi Interior Minister, he said, has also denied his involvement in the Saudi bombings. He regretted that United States and some others are leveling false allegations against Osama in a bid to make Afghanistan further suffer. He alleged that in fact, the United States is having enmity with Afghanistan and not with Osama.

He said that western lobby has been running poisonous propaganda campaign to malign the Taliban government. The western countries, he said, are in fact scared of the enforcement of Islamic system in Afghanistan and that is why, they are making non-issues as issues.

The minister also deplored that the United Nations had promised the establishment of four universities in the war-ravaged Afghanistan but so far nothing has been done.

# Taliban to accommodate three Shia leaders in govt

News 981130

By Rahimullah Yusufzai

PESHAWAR: In a significant move to make their government in Afghanistan broad-based, the Taliban Islamic Movement founder Mulla Mohammad Omar announced Sunday that the three Shia leaders who recently declared support for the Taliban would be given official responsibilities.

Mulla Wakil Ahmad Mutawakil, an aide to Mulla Omar, said in Kandahar that Hezb-i-Wahdat head Ustad Mohammad Akbari, an important Shia military commander Khodadad Irfani and former Junbush-i-Milli Islami leader Nasim Mehdi would be accommodated in the Taliban-led Afghan government.

However, he made it clear that

the three and other opposition figures swearing allegiance to the Taliban would be accommodated as individuals and not as representatives of a political group.

"We want to use their experience and knowledge to rebuild Afghanistan as we need men who can deliver," explained Mutawakil.

It may be added that there is presently no ranking Shia in the Taliban administration. The Taliban captured the Shia heartland of Bamiyan in central Afghanistan in September and forced the mainstream Hezb-i-Wahdat leader Karim Khalili to flee to Iran.

Earlier in August, they had captured Mazar-i-Sharif, which was

largely controlled by Hezb-i-Wahdat and a smaller Shia party, Harkat-i-Islami of Shaikh Asef Mohseni.

Akbari, who broke away from Khalili in 1994 and formed his own faction of Hezb-i-Wahdat, surrendered to the Taliban recently and travelled to Kabul to declare support to the Taliban.

Next, Nasim Mehdi, who in the past was a close aide to defeated Uzbek warlord Gen Abdul Rasheed Dostum, announced that he was in the Taliban headquarters of Kandahar and was now loyal to the Taliban government. Yesterday, Irfani broke his silence in Ghazni and declared that he had unconditionally joined hands with the Taliban.

These public pronouncements of support for the Taliban by prominent opposition figures is quite an achievement for the Taliban, especially as it has come at a time when they are facing renewed military pressure on their position in Northern Afghanistan by Ahmad Shah Masud and other opposition commanders.



# Masood consolidating power, thanks to traditional rivalries

FP 981202

PESHAWAR - With dramatic changes in the internal politico-military equation in Afghanistan over the last two years, fresh realignment of forces across the country is in the offing.

Some key Shia opposition leaders, such as Ustad Mohammad Akbari, chief of his own faction of Hizb-i-Wahdat; Sadik Parwani and Khodaidad Irfani of Hizb-i-Wahadat (Khalili) and Mehdi Naseem, second-in-command to Uzbek warlord Gen Abdul Rashid Dostum and a leader of Jumbish-i-Mili Islami, have joined hands with the Taliban.

On their part, the Taliban have shown willingness to accommodate these leaders in the ruling shura, whose membership has now gone up from six to nine.

On the other hand, the Hizb-i-Islami Afghanistan (HIA) dissident group, after revolting against Engr Gulbaddin Hekmatyar, activated their military activities in the north and north-east of Afghanistan, and have publicly come out in support of the Masood-led opposition.

According to sources, the HIA dissident, Hamoun Jareer, helped Masood win over the scattered anti-Taliban commanders in the northern parts of the country.

Many Afghan observers are of the view that the opposition's recent military victories in the northern provinces of Kunduz and Baghlan became possible when the ex-commanders of HIA

he is regrouping anti-Taliban commanders against the student militia.

Haji Qadeer, ex-governor of Ningarhar and chief of the erstwhile eastern Shura, is currently in Nooristan, but has reportedly lost grip over the commanders loyal to the shura in the past.

Because of strong resistance to the leadership of Haji Qadeer, the opposition is utilizing the good offices of other influential commanders to warm up the eastern front, the sources said.

Masood has reportedly put huge resources in addition to two helicopters on the command of some of his close aides in the eastern parts of Afghanistan to organize military resistance against the Taliban.

These resources are substantial enough, say the sources, and have impacted even the Pakistani economy where the US dollar has registered a fall against the rupee as a result.

In the western parts of the country, however, the opposition is facing serious difficulties in organising resistance to Taliban.

Sources further confided to this scribe that thousands of opposition soldiers on the Iranian side of the border off Herat are waiting for the green signal to start activities against Taliban in

Herat and other areas in western Afghanistan.

The personality clash between Uzbek commander Gen Abdul Malik and Sayed Noorullah Agha, a prominent commander of Jamiat-i-Islami (of Prof Rabbani) is said to be causing delay, as both of them aspire to command the recently-raised opposition force in Iran.

The recent Iranian warning to Taliban government to arrest and prosecute the killers of Iranian diplomats has been timed to preempt further defections in the opposition ranks, and to boost the morale of the Masood-led opposition forces, the sources observed.

News 981202

## UN local staff supplying food to Hazarajat: official

ISLAMABAD: The United Nations said on Tuesday that the local Afghan staff of the world body is supplying food to the people in Hazarajat which has been declared a food-deficit area.

"After security assurances from the Taliban and after their handing over of vehicles, the local UN staff is supplying food to the people in Hazarajat before snowfall creates difficulties," a spokesperson of UN Humanitarian Coordinator for Afghanistan said.

The food supplies are being carried from Yakawalling "which still has some stocks" as according to UN officials much of 1500 tonnes of food supplied by WST has disappeared.

The UN international staff last week undertook an "exceptional" visit to the area to assess the "food and security situation" in the area.

The world body had pulled out its international staff from Afghanistan following the killing of an Italian worker in Kabul August last. The UN and the Taliban reached an agreement on the realisation of security for the UN staff in October.—APP

## News Analysis

AIMAL KHAN

changed loyalties to the opposition, added the sources.

In the same manner, another HIA defector, Wahidullah Saboon, is active in the eastern provinces of Kunar, Laghman, Ningarhar and Nooristan, where

The Taliban commander Maulvi Ayub, a local chief of reserve force, opened fire on the agitating students of Jalalabad Medical College and killed three of them. One of them was identified as Naseem. Daoud, a wounded student, was brought to Peshawar for treatment Tuesday afternoon. The students were protesting the alleged embezzlement in hostel funds by Maulvi Yousaf, the principal of the Jalalabad Medical College. After receiving information about the students' protest, Maulvi Yousaf informed his brother Maulvi Ayub, who came to the students and tried to stop them from agitation. After failure to convince the infuriated students to end their protest, Maulvi Ayub opened fire on the agitating students.

## Taliban kill three protesting students

FP 981202

PESHAWAR - The Taliban indiscriminate fire killed three Afghan students and injured five Tuesday in the eastern city of Jalalabad.

The Taliban commander Maulvi Ayub, a local chief of reserve force, opened fire on the agitating students of Jalalabad Medical College and killed three of them. One of them was identified as Naseem.

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# How the Taliban slaughtered 8,000

FP 981115

Michael Winchester

**When the Taliban took Mazar-i-Sharif in August, they were bent on revenge. The radical killed at least 6,000 civilians.**

The crack of rifle fire was nothing new for Amirshah. After all, he had been defending the northern city of Mazar-i-Sharif against the advancing Taliban for long enough. What worried him was that the rifle fire was coming from behind his position on the western edge of Mazar. From within the city it-

self "I drove back into town with a truck full of troops to check it out," the young Shia Muslim recalls. "We heard more shooting and then saw the Taliban. We took cover in the ditches as they attacked and surrounded us."

Amirshah and his men fought until they ran out of ammunition. Then emerged with their hands raised. Their captors offered them to form a rough line, stepped back and opened fire. Miraculously unscathed, Amirshah (not his real name) says he lay among the bodies of his dead comrades for two full days before crawling into hiding. The fate of his unit was an early harbinger of worse to come. What unfolded in Mazar on Saturday, Aug 8, and in the days that followed, was slaughter of a scale and brutality without precedent in 20 years of turmoil in Afghanistan. It has brought West Asia face to face with the prospect of wider war and a spreading virus of Shia-Sunni violence.

The truth was slow to reach the outside world. The sole foreign reporter in the city, Iranian Mahmud Saremi, was shot dead with eight diplomats by men the Taliban leadership later described as "renegades." Then, ominously, the radical Sunni militia imposed a news black-

out that remains in place across all northern Afghanistan. "Closing down the northern areas is unlike anything I've seen in post-1992 Afghanistan," says an Islamabad-based diplomat. "They're hiding something big."

Or trying to. After weeks on the road, a trickle of refugees from Mazar has been reaching the relative security of Pakistan, hunted, harassed and imprisoned by Taliban soldiers along the way. Their initial accounts were sufficiently harrowing to prompt some international

official to downplay them rather than provide Shia Iran with iron-clad grounds for punitive war against Afghanistan's extremist Sunni militia. But from interviews with survivors (whose names have been changed) and documents obtained from international aid organisations, Asiaweek has pieced together a broad picture of what took place in Mazar.

Drawn from eyewitness accounts from all the city's racial groups - Hazara, Uzbek, Tajik and Pushtun - that picture is of an officially directed ethnic pogrom

in which as many as 6,000 may have been butchered. One senior UN official sees "echoes of Srebrenica," the Bosnian "safe-haven" where in July 1995 the Serb military systematically slaughtered thousands of unarmed Muslims males. "Mazar stops short of genocide," he says. "But not far short."

## Treachery and Revenge

The collapse of Mazar came entirely unexpectedly - despite the Taliban's relentless march north. The city was adequately defended by various militias, brought together in an uneasy alliance. But in Afghanistan, numbers and hardware seldom translate into military security. As is their wont, the Taliban exploited ethnic rifts in the northern camp, making common cause with their ethnic cousins, Pushtuns from Balkh district 25 km west of Mazar. In a secret deal commented in early August, Pushtun commanders agreed to spearhead the attack on the city. This was bad enough. Worse was that Taliban check-book strategy had prevailed on several Uzbek commanders in Deh Dadi, 15 km from Mazar, to stand aside and allow their enemies to pass through.

In Mazar that morning there was no inkling of treachery. Both the Shia chief Mohaqiq and the police chief were in their offices by 9 am and cleared flights to land later in the day at the airport. As the cool of morning gave way to the baking heat of a northern summer, merchants, traders and money-changers thronged the central markets. "This was the time of business," recalls Malik, a Tajik refugee. "The city was already crowded."

At about 10.15 am, the first pick up trucks loaded with Taliban and their Pushtun allies roared into the city unopposed from Deh Dadi. The resistance was brief. Outflanked, and then surrounded, the main Shia force in positions of on the Balkh road, four km outside the city, were all wiped out before noon. Of an estimated 1,500 or more troops, fewer than 100 survived.

Simultaneously, the Taliban turned on the civilians. In what one witness later described as a "killing frenzy," Taliban troops, in vehicles and on foot, opened fire on anything that moved - cutting down vendors, women shoppers; children even donkeys and camels. "There were bodies lying every where like flies," says Malik. The carnage was greatest in the wide streets around the

central Rowzah mosque, putative resting place of Ali, the Prophet's son-in-law. As hundreds ran for shelter, others rushed to upper windows to see what was happening below - only to draw the attention of Taliban marksmen.

"I was in the Mandai'i market [just north of the mosque] when the Taliban entered the city killing everyone they saw on the streets," recalls Raouf, a

Hazara vendor. "My cousin was with me as we started running, but was hit in the leg. I couldn't carry him so I had to leave him. When the Taliban reached him, they killed him."

The Taliban and their local Pushtun allies had two objectives. One was simple and as ancient as the land itself - revenge. themselves betrayed and defeated in these same streets in May 1997, they aimed to even the score. The other motive was hard headed strategy: to terrorize a hostile city of some half a million in to total paralysis.

Between 10.30 am and 4 pm, they succeeded many times over. Several hundred civilians died on the streets as Taliban vehicles raced thorough the city's main thoroughfares, guns blazing. But this was more than random massacre. Many vehicles, guided by Balkh Pushtuns familiar with the city, made directly for key buildings and installations. Other units targeted the residences of opposition leaders and military commanders, as well as international aid offices, swiftly seizing their communications equipment and looting their vehicles. "They had an exact idea of who was who," reckons Hussein, a Shia school teacher, who fled with his wife and child. "It was all extremely disciplined and systematic."

The Taliban's most fateful visitation was to the Iranian consulate - general, where they seized eight diplomats and the journalist, bundled them into a cellar and gunned them down. It was those nine deaths - denied and equivocated over for weeks - that would much later propel the fall of Mazar to the top of the international agenda as Iran mobilised for war.

As the Taliban fanned out into the back streets, Hazara Shias - often distinguishable by their pronounced Asiatic features - quickly realized they had been singled out for special treatment. At 11.30 that morning, Gaffur says he took shelter from firing near the Balkh Gate, just west of the main mosque in a courtyard that was soon searched by Taliban: "The 25 people in the courtyard were interrogated harshly - all were civilians, mostly cart-pullers and street traders," he claims. "Nine who were Hazaras they shot and dumped their bodies in a well."

Raouf, the trader who had earlier lost his cousin, later reached home safely. "At about one o'clock I heard a Datsun [pick up] passing my street and the sound of continuous firing for 10 min-

# How the Taliban slaughtered 8,000

utes. After the firing stopped I heard people crying and the voices of the Taliban. They were asking people where the Hazara houses were."

By Sunday random butchery was being paralleled by more methodical house-to-house searches that targeted Shia suburbs. The quarters were sealed off as groups of armed Taliban combed them street by street. In some streets Taliban troops broke open doors, promptly shooting the men before ransacking the homes in front of hysterical women and children. In other streets, civilians were moved out of their houses, and the men of fighting age taken away in trucks. Two weeks later the Shia suburb of Ali Chopan once home to some 3,000 families, was all but deserted.

## Operation Pacification

Laurels for the conquest of Aug 8 went to Khairullah Khairkhwah, a Taliban mullah who when not busy making war doubles as the regime's "interior minister." But on Aug 9, Day Two, the fate of Mazar's citizens fell to a newly appointed acting governor and chairman of the city's "security commission."

Abdul Manan Niazi. A Pushtun from southwestern Shindand, Niazi is a slightly built man of medium height, intense and highly strung. Installed in a requisitioned three-story house conveniently close to the central jail, he set about his task of "pacifying" an already prostrate city.

Mass round-ups of fighting age men began on the Saturday involving males from all ethnic groups, including the occasional Pushtun. The only difference was that Hazaras risked summary execution on the street or in their house, depending on the mood of their captors.

By Day Two, the process had gathered real momentum as thousands of men were trucked off to the central jail. By evening, this primitive facility - equipped with two water taps and minimal toilet facilities - was overflowing with a crush of men who in many cells needed to take turns to sit down. In the sweltering heat, water was provided by the simple expedient of hosing down cells from tankers truck, forcing prisoners to catch what they could in hats or suck moisture from their own drenched clothes.

Segregation by race followed, often presided over personally by Niazi whose word was now law. Pushtuns were immediately released Tajiks and Uzbeks interrogated over their religious practices and then usually freed. Hazaras and other Shias were thrown back in. Around the jail hundreds of wailing women begged guards for news of their loved ones.

There are no reports of any armed resistance after Saturday afternoon. But on Sunday and for several days that followed the crackle of small-arms fire could be heard across the city, sometimes bursts of automatic fire. The victors were taking no chances: Some streets were searched for arms as many as they or four times. Arbitrary streets executions and arrests continued apace.

In a gesture of contempt for the dead and warning for the living, Niazi issued orders that the hundreds of corpses lit-

tering the streets should be left where they had fallen. "One of my worst memories about it all was the bodies," recalled Shukrullah, a Hazara who says he narrowly escaped execution. "There were bodies everywhere, lying in the back streets, in doorways, hanging out of windows." Before long, packs of snarling dogs began tearing the bloated corpses as the living hurried past, cloths, to their noses. After several days, when the stench and hazard to health became too great, Niazi relented and set teams to work cleaning up the streets.

The prison too was becoming a serious health hazard and two days after the city's fall it was decided to begin shipping Hazara prisoners out of Mazar to Shiberghan, 95 km to the west. Thousands of prisoners were soon being herded from their cells into containers on the backs of trucks, as many as 120 men squeezed into six-meter containers.

There were unfortunate mishaps, though it seems unlikely Niazi or any of his commanders lost any sleep over them. In three instances, locked, containers were opened at Shiberghan to reveal scores of bodies heaped on top of each other, having died of dehydration asphyxiation in the roasting heat. But the Taliban's Final Solution for Mazar rolled on unabated.

Before long Shiberghan jail too was overflowing. Prisoners were then flown and trucked south to more distant jails in Maimana, Herat and southern Kandahar. By last week, the Red Cross, which finally was allowed access to the jails, estimated that 4,500 Hazaras were incarcerated. Another 1,500 had already been released.

Many in Mazar are convinced that others in Shiberghan jail were tucked out into the rolling, pasture country Southwest of the city known as Dashti-Layli and massacred there. Ominously, it was in Dashti-Layli that hundreds of Taliban prisoners-of-war were last year slaughtered by their Uzbek captors. To date there have been no first-hand reports confirming systematic massacres near Shiberghan and the full truth may never be known. But the road through the area has apparently been closed by the Taliban and at least one second-hand account from a refugee who reached Pakistan speaks of hundreds of corpses strewn across the pastures.

No one will ever know how many innocents died in the rape of Mazar. The Taliban certainly were not counting and if they had been would not be telling. But several sober estimates put the toll at a minimum of 6,000. Today a traumatised city is limping back to a semblance of normality, though half of its shops are still shuttered.

For its surviving Shia population, many still cowering in their homes, the message has been unambiguous. Their mosques have been closed. And in ranting speeches broadcast on radio, Taliban commissar Niazi has set forth three stark choices: convert to Sunni Islam, go to Shia Iran or die. As they promised in 1995, the Taliban have indeed brought to a once vibrant city the twin blessings of Islam and peace - the twisted Islam of the sectarian bigot and the peace of the dead.

## Brüder im Geiste, vereint im Unverständnis

Der Streit zwischen Iran und Afghanistan zeigt, daß die islamistische Welt nicht so homogen ist, wie manche Theorie es gern hätte

Daß die neue Weltordnung ein fürchterliches Durcheinander ist, hätte man wissen können, als George Bush sie verkündete. Als dann das „Ende der Geschichte“ am Ende war, wurde es von Huntingtons „clash of civilizations“ abgelöst. Aber wieder will die Welt sich an Erklärungen nicht halten. Die Kriege der neunziger Jahre finden nicht zwischen, sondern innerhalb von Zivilisation statt. Und seitdem es keine Blöcke mehr gibt, lassen sie sich auch nicht mehr in ein Blockschema pressen. Heute führen zwar weiterhin Stellvertreter Krieg, aber wen sie vertreten, ist kaum durchschaubar. Und sofern westliche Beobachter das verstehen, sind sie erst recht verwirrt. Man müßte schon Frankreich und die Vereinigten Staaten als je eigene Zivilisationen begreifen, um etwa die letzten Kriege in Afrika als mittelbare Folge eines Zivilisationskonfliktes zu bezeichnen. Eine Ausnahme scheint der Süden Sudans zu sein, doch sieht man genauer hin, stellt sich heraus, daß sich dort weniger die Konfessionen bekriegen als die Konsortien.

Jüngstes Beispiel für die neue Weltordnung ist das Säbelraseln an der Grenze zwischen Iran und Afghanistan. Obwohl doch so gut wie ausgemacht war, daß der islamische Fundamentalismus nichts anderes im Sinn habe, als das christliche Abendland zu stürmen, stehen sich dort zwei fundamentalistische Staaten gegenüber. Allmählich müßte der politischen Populärwissenschaft in den Vereinigten Staaten und anderswo aufgehen, daß weder der Fundamentalismus noch der Islam als solcher homogene Gebilde sind, die gemeinsame Ziele verfolgen.

Nun ist es zwar offenkundig, daß die Religion in der Alltagskultur und im politischen Diskurs vieler muslimischer Länder eine größere Rolle spielt als noch vor zwei Jahrzehnten, wie überhaupt die Besinnung auf das, was Menschen als ihre kulturelle, ethnische oder religiöse „Identität“ empfinden, ein weltweites und häufig bedrohliches Phänomen ist. Das kann aber nicht darüber hinwegtäuschen, daß die Realpolitik weniger denn je von weltanschaulichen Erwägungen bestimmt wird. Zumal im Nahen und Mittleren Osten genießen die materiellen und strategischen Interessen so offenkundig Priorität, daß selbst ein islamistischer Sprachschleier sie kaum mehr verhüllt. Wie sonst wäre zu erklären, daß die Islamische Republik Iran, um einen anderen Konflikt anzuführen, es mit dem christlichen Armenien hält, während die säkulare Türkei das muslimische Aserbaidschan unterstützt? Weshalb hat selbst der islamistische Ministerpräsident der Türkei während seiner Amtszeit das Bündnis mit Israel

nicht angetastet, um den arabischen Glaubensbrüdern zur Seite zu stehen? Und warum hielt das schiitische Iran still, als der einstige Todfeind Saddam Hussein nach dem Ende des zweiten Golfkrieges die irakischen Schiiten in die Sümpfe am Schatt el-Arab trieb?

Auch die jetzige Auseinandersetzung zwischen Afghanistan und Iran läßt sich in das übliche ideologische Raster nicht einordnen. Die Taliban, die sich noch am ehesten von einer Weltanschauung leiten lassen und sich alle Mühe geben, das Schreckenskliche des muslimischen Fundamentalismus noch zu übertreffen, werden von den westlichen Verbündeten Pakistan und Saudi-Arabien unterstützt, und sogar die Vereinigten Staaten haben die Formierung der Koranschüler mit mehr als nur Wohlwollen begleitet. Hingegen findet sich der sogenannte Gottesstaat Iran in einer Allianz mit dem noch immer als atheistisch geltenden Rußland, den betont antiislamistischen Staaten Zentralasiens sowie Indien, dessen Atombomben im Gegensatz zu denen Pakistans nicht im Ruf stehen, islamisch zu sein.

Will man die Logik dieser Blockbildung verstehen, hilft weder der Koran noch Huntingtons Bibel weiter. Ein Blick auf die Landkarte ist nützlicher: Es gibt nur zwei Wege, auf denen die Öl- und Gasvorkommen aus Zentralasien ans Arabische Meer geschafft werden können. Entweder verlaufen die Pipelines durch Afghanistan und Pakistan, oder sie verlaufen durch russisches Einflußgebiet und Iran. Weiß man, welcher Staat welche Möglichkeit favorisiert, weiß man auch, auf welcher Seite der Front er steht.

Obwohl die Iraner den Taliban mittlerweile weitere Massaker an der Bevölkerung der schiitischen Stadt Bamijan vorgeworfen haben, sieht es immer noch so aus, als könne die große militärische Auseinandersetzung vermieden werden. Die Bevölkerung ist zehn Jahre nach dem Waffenstillstand mit dem Irak noch immer kriegsmüde, und auch die meisten Zeitungskommentatoren suchen nach Wegen, wie der Staat das Gesicht wahren möge, ohne militärisch einzugreifen. Die Vereinten Nationen könnten den Iranern diese Brücke womöglich bauen, nur setzte das voraus, daß auch sie sich im Sicherheitsrat zu Maßnahmen gegen die Taliban durchringen. Die jüngsten Äußerungen aus Washington, die erstmals Verständnis für die Wut Teherans ausdrücken, mögen in diese Richtung weisen.

Bislang haben die Vereinigten Staaten im Umgang mit den Taliban vorgeführt, zu welchen Extremen die Realpolitik sich treiben läßt. Daß die sprichwörtlich geworde-

nen „doppelten Standards“ allerdings nicht immer der klügste Maßstab sind, um die politischen Realitäten zu beurteilen, hätten die Vereinigten Staaten aus den Bombenanschlägen von Nairobi und Daressalam, die vom Taliban-Gebiet aus geplant wurden, lernen können. Doch den Geistern, die man rief, Einhalt zu gebieten war spätestens vergessen, als die Geister signalisierten, nun endlich das Prinzip des Mannschaftssports begriffen zu haben: Foulen darf man nur die Gegner.

Nicht mehr das Menetekel einer gescheiterten Außenpolitik, sondern nur noch ein Betriebsunfall ist Osama bin Laden seitdem. Das einzige, was aus Washington zu hören war, nachdem die Taliban offenbar Tausende Schiiten in Mazar-i-Scharif ermordet und Dutzende Iraner als Geisel genommen hatten, war die Warnung an Teheran, nicht einzugreifen. Wagt es nicht, unsere Politik zu kopieren, ließe sich das auch übersetzen. Die Iraner wiederum, die in den vergangenen Jahren noch jede Chance genutzt haben, als Bösewichte dazustehen, legten plötzlich Besonnenheit an den Tag. Verkehrte Welt: Während Washington es vor seinen jüngsten Bombardements nicht für nötig befand, die Vereinten Nationen anzurufen und es offenbar auch jetzt für überflüssig hält, Beweise für seine Anschuldigungen gegen Sudan vorzulegen, hielt sich Teheran, obwohl seine Vorwürfe von Amnesty International bekräftigt wurden, bislang so ostentativ an das Völkerrecht, als wäre es dessen Vater. Selbst die Meldung, daß Israel im Westen Afghanistans Horchposten eingerichtet habe, um Iran auszuspionieren, löste nur gedämpfte diplomatische Proteste Teherans aus.

Natürlich unterliegt auch die neue Maßhaltpolitik Irans realpolitischem Interesse: Quer durch fast alle Fraktionen hat die Führung erkannt, daß die Kunst des Isolationismus, des Revolutionsexports und der Dritte-Welt-Romantik brotlos ist. Die Unterschiede zwischen den Fraktionen bestehen allein darin, ob sie sich zu dieser Erkenntnis bekennen und ob sie Neigung zeigen, nun den Musterknaben zu geben. Aber niemand mehr in Iran mag eingestehen, daß ihm das in Harvard entworfene Szenario des „clash of civilizations“ sympathischer sei als Chatamis Werben für einen Dialog der Zivilisationen. Verkehrt an dieser Welt ist auch dies: Daß der Präsident Irans bei seiner für diesen Monat geplanten Reise nach New York zu den Vereinten Nationen nicht seinen amerikanischen Amtskollegen treffen wird, liegt nicht an seinem, sondern an dessen schlechtem Leumund. Wenn schon der demokratische Gouverneur von Virginia Bill Clinton nicht

mehr die Hand geben will, dann kann Chatami sich – obwohl er an eine Begegnung gedacht haben mag, als er die Reise vor Monaten ankündigte – einen gemeinsamen Auftritt erst recht nicht leisten.

Gewiß: Wollte man über die Außenpolitik von Russen, Iranern, Pakistanis oder Indern sprechen, fielen die Beurteilung kaum freundlicher aus. Der Unterschied aber ist, daß die Amerikaner die einzigen unter ihnen sind, die in der Welt noch einen Ruf zu verlieren haben. Ihre Massenkultur ist für die Menschen des Nahen und Mittleren Ostens von geradezu rätselhafter Bannkraft. Aber sie praktizieren in dieser Region eine Politik, die nicht nur aus dieser Bannkraft keinen Nutzen schlägt, sondern dabei ist, noch den letzten Kredit zu verspielen: Das liegt an der Duldsamkeit gegenüber Netanjahus Israel, die keinem Außenstehenden mehr zu vermitteln ist; es liegt am Paktieren mit Regimen, die nicht nur die Menschenrechte mindestens so grob verletzen wie die „Schurkenstaaten“, sondern auch ideologisch und finanziell maßgeblich für den Vormarsch des Fundamentalismus in der gesamten islamischen Welt verantwortlich sind; es liegt an der Selbstverständlichkeit, mit der internationale Konventionen mißachtet werden, während man bei Rechtsbrüchen anderer Richter und Rächer in einem spielt; und schließlich liegt es auch daran, daß die Vereinten Staaten den Verdacht nicht zerstreuen, daß der Zeitpunkt amerikanischer Luftangriffe von den sexuellen Verwicklungen des Präsidenten diktiert wird.

In Iran, dessen Jugend amerikafreundlicher ist als alle vorherigen Generationen, in dessen erwachsener Bevölkerung sich jedoch die aus der Schahzeit herrührende Skepsis gegenüber den Motiven amerikanischer Außenpolitik bewahrt hat, denken viele so: 28 Monate nachdem wir mit Mohammad Mossadegh im April 1951 zum ersten Mal einen Ministerpräsidenten frei gewählt haben, stürzten ihn die Amerikaner durch einen Putsch. Siebzehn Monate nachdem wir zum zweiten Mal einen Regierungschef in freier Wahl bestimmt haben, haben die Amerikaner den Irak angestiftet, Iran anzugreifen, was die Entmachtung und Flucht Bani-Sadrs unmittelbar zur Folge hatte. Dreizehn Monate nach dem Amtsantritt Chatamis provozieren uns die von Amerika unterstützten Taliban zu einem Krieg. Was immer daran auch falsch ist – die versöhnlichen Kräfte in Teheran und anderen Hauptstädten des Nahen und Mittleren Ostens hätten es leichter, wenn Washington aufhörte, die Verschwörungstheorien ihrer Gegner zu nähren.

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